THE NEW YEAR IS HERE
ARE YOU READY?

what about
BILITERACY?

THIRD CULTURE KIDS
is your child already one?

getting started
raising bilingual children
YOUR EXPERT GUIDE

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• top questions answered
• 9 language activities

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www.alphabet-garten.com

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www.welovespanish.com

Language Lizard
Delightful dual language books and products!
www.languagelizard.com

Iguana
The Spanish-language magazine geared towards kids aged 7 to 12, www.iguanamagazine.com
Another year is upon us and with it comes new challenges. Have you already created your list of New Year’s Resolutions for how you will do better this year in supporting language in your family? Want to spend more time speaking your language? Been putting off joining or starting a language playgroup? What about your children learning to read and write in the second language - have you given that any thought? If you are like most of us, you find it hard to know where to begin once you have your list in place. Even the best intentions can’t put goals into action.

Luckily, we have others to help us out, especially at this time of year full of new beginnings. The theme for this issue of Multilingual Living Magazine is “getting started and staying motivated in raising bilingual children.” We have asked experts, researchers, parents, families and more to share their best kept secrets with us so that we can learn from what is working (and not working) for them. Their knowledge, insight and expertise is what makes this magazine the perfect supplement to a multilingual life.

As always, the line-up of articles in this issue is incredible. We are honored to have experts from so many differing fields to share their insights. Fred Genesee has written an article for us on how to get started in raising bilingual children. His “short guide” will answer some of your most pressing questions and get you on your way. And don’t miss Madalena and Gerry’s articles! They will give you just want you need to take those first steps! As always, Suzanne will inspire you with her honesty and wit to help you find ways to blend your different languages and cultures.

As we have come to appreciate, our columnists will touch your heart, share your concerns and offer a supportive hand. Knowing what others are going through and how they are making things work can be just the support we need. It is an honor to have so many share their insecurities, worries and tears as well as joys, successes and delights.

Are you a Third Culture Kid or maybe you are raising one? TCKs are a unique breed indeed. They often feel they are caught between worlds, cultures, languages and countries but they wouldn’t have it any other way. Make sure you are aware of what it means to be a TCK, how to support the needs of TCKs (whether you are one or are raising one) and to come to realize that you and your children are not alone. The world is FULL of TCKs just like you and your family.

So, your children are speaking your language - CONGRATULATIONS! But you aren’t sure how to go about helping them become biliterate in your language. Don’t assume that biliteracy will happen on its own in your family. Your children need to have a reason to learn how to read and write in your language. If you have visions of your children sending hand-written letters to their grandparents overseas, they must know how to write in your language. Or perhaps you are looking forward to when your children can discuss some of your favorite authors and books with you? This can not happen if they are unable to read in your language. In this issue, our experts share tips, ideas and guidance in how to support your children in their biliteracy efforts. Don’t hesitate. Get started NOW before your children have lost interest.

Feeling frustrated? Not sure how to get your children to use your language? How about some language activities? Try one of our 9 activities and see if your children can resist using your language! Keeping language use fun is a key to success. It is important to first figure out which types of activities interest each of your children. Then make sure to try out a few different ones to figure out what works. Remember, an activity that works one day or week or month may not work the next time around. Stay flexible and be willing to go with the flow. Your children will notice and appreciate it.

THANK YOU for all of your questions! Please keep them coming. Each time you send in a question for one of our experts, you help answer issues that others are dealing with as well. Although it often feels we are living alone in a vacuum, this is not the case. In this issue, Kate shares her question about how to introduce letters in her language to her children. What should you do when the same
letter is pronounced differently in each language? Won’t our children become confused? Is there a right and wrong way to do this? Madalena shares her insights and tips to help us get on our way. And what about choosing which languages to maintain in your household? Grace helps Laine, and us, decide on the criteria to make such decisions.

We have a delightful addition in this issue... Oliver Kim introduces us to Esperanto. If there ever was a language created for multilingualism across the globe, this is it! We will have additional lessons in future issue, so stay tuned and have fun.

These are just some random highlights of this issue of Multilingual Living Magazine. The full contents will delight you, touch your heart and bring you page after page of inspiration. We would like to thank each and every one of our contributors who provide articles, essays and more. It is a true honor for us to be able to pass on their valuable words to you.

It is easy to forget that language and culture in our lives are not only extremely important, they are the foundation of who we are as individuals and a family and they help define who our children will become. Many of us have suppressed our frustrations and stayed silent over the years as we struggled with our feelings of dissatisfaction, unsure of why we felt so disjointed. The time has come to acknowledge the importance of all of your unique facets and to put them into play.

As Harriet encourages in this issue, take the opportunity this new year to care for yourself and to take care of your family’s true multilingual and multicultural needs. You are not alone. There are millions of people who are struggling to make sense of their language-complex lives. Sometimes we are thriving, sometimes falling behind. As our sister organization in Australia, Bilingual Families Perth, has said it perfectly on the cover of their new CD created to support families just like yours: “bilingualism is beautiful.”

Your language, your culture, your life, your family is beautiful because of your multilingual mixture. The elements you combine to form your linguistic mosaic create a unique masterpiece of your making. You are a multilingual artist, a sculptor, a musician, an inventor. Just make sure to stand back and appreciate your wonderful creation from time to time!

Your MLL Editors,
Corey and Alice
Thank you so much for forwarding this most recent issue my way. I can’t wait to dig in!!! As a parent, it is so exciting to find this resource and I congratulate you on your admirable efforts.
Sincerely,
Gerry M.

Wow! Phenomenal job!
I still have to read it in detail, but it looks fantastic... congratulations!
Anneke

I just read the on line Multilingual Living Magazine. This is beautiful, and the piece on dyslexia and Multilanguage I could have used today in the clinic.
Betsy Ormond, MN, FNP, ARNP
Wallingford, Pediatrics
Seattle, WA 98103

Congratulations to the November/December edition. It is a stunning piece of work. Well done. An enrichment for the world with articles of interest for everybody. 100 pages, what a record! Great job and very well done indeed to you and your team!
Irima, Bilingual Families Perth

Congratulations! Amazing work you’ve done!
Michele Anciaux Aoki
Owner, Anciaux International Communication
Team Member, Washington State Coalition for International Education

I have recently added your URL to my website, “Anacleta’s Spanish and World Language and Culture Links” on the following page:
www.anacleta.com/parentsssecondlanguage.html
My site is a comprehensive source of materials, activities, and ideas about the Spanish language and its many cultures, as well as other world language and cultures, especially for children under ten and their parents and FLES, dual language, immersion, and bilingual teachers.
Sincerely,
Kathleen Siddons
www.anacleta.com
celebratingcesarchavez.homestead.com/index.html

This magazine is Fantastic.
Thank you.
Keep warm,
Cheers,
Lisa
Our group is a GERMAN group in Huntington Beach, California (plus surrounding cities). We don't really have a name but our Yahoo Group is HBGermanFamilies. Anyone who wants to subscribe can email: HBGermanFamilies-subscribe@yahoogroups.de

Thank you.
Andrea

First of all, I want to thank you for your magazine, full of insights that are helping me prepare for my own multilingual family adventure. Growing up in old Castilla, I heard mostly Spanish around me, although the proximity of Galicia introduced me to the different tongues spoken in Spain. When I met my now wife, I had to dive head first into a family in which the main language is Valencian, a dialect of Catalan. While they made an effort to speak Spanish when I was around, they eventually switched back to Valencian without noticing. I grasped the basics of the language fairly quickly, and I can follow most conversations easily now, but I can only sympathize with those multilingual families in which the languages are not as similar as ours.

Now that we are married, we have settled in London. Both my wife and I are fluent in English, but we hope we can handle a multilingual family in which our children are fluent in all three languages. We know now, thanks to your wonderful magazine, that it can be done successfully. We look forward to many helpful articles to help us through in the future.

With my sincere appreciation,
Luis in London

I just wanted to let you know that I'm finally getting around to printing out the magazine and I think it is wonderful! I've been searching everywhere for a resource like this. If you don't mind, I will do a write up about your magazine for my blog www.reluctanthousewife.com.

Please let me know if there is any way I can contribute to your organization.

Sincerely,
Roxanna Sarmiento
(mom of 1 Latino/Austrian toddler and another on the way)

I just wanted to let you know that I really did speak English with my Mum on Tuesday when I picked her up from the airport!!! :)
Not straight away, but we talked English about 15 minutes in the car! I must say I am a bit proud of myself. ;)
It wasn't the very best English but at least I got a start. I think you're right with your presumption that I'll probably take it more and more seriously the closer I get to having children of my own.

Greetings
Kristina

P.S.: I think the magazine is great!!! I enjoy reading every single article! As someone wrote, I too would pay more for the magazine if it was published as a hard copy. It looks so professional. Hopefully you'll sooner or later find someone to help you. That would be excellent!

(To read Kristina's original “Ask An Expert” question, go to the November-December 2006 issue here: biculturalfamily.org/nov06/multilinguallivingtoc.html.)
Top picks for the New Year from **Language Land**

**Jigsaw Book of France**

Recommended for ages 4+. A colourful jigsaw atlas detailing the sights, people, objects and places of France. Each of the five sturdy jigsaws shows a different region of the country, from the historical northwest to the sunny south. Includes a detailed picture map showing the highlights and attractions of Paris. Provides an interactive learning experience as children enjoy the challenge of completing the jigsaws while learning about the culture and geography of France.  
*More information: [www.languageland.co.uk](http://www.languageland.co.uk)*

**Adventures with Nicholas Gift Set**  
(Available in French & Spanish)

Designed by language experts to engage and delight children aged 4–9, the sets include the popular ‘The Five Crayons storybook,’ an accompanying audio CD and a lovely Nicholas soft toy. In The Five Crayons Nicholas entertains his bored younger brother by drawing a variety of colourful pictures. The adventure begins when the pictures come to life. The book includes song lyrics, a picture dictionary, word list and letter to parents. Children are taught more than 300 words and phrases – subjects include the weather, transport and numbers – as well as the present tense. A 60-minute audio CD complements the book with a complete narration of the story, an audio dictionary and eight lively songs.  
*More information: [www.languageland.co.uk](http://www.languageland.co.uk)*

**Spanish Ad Libs - Simple Sentences Activity Book**

Recommended for Ages 7+ An engaging activity book that focuses on letter combinations and sounds, constructing basic sentences, learning the parts of speech and developing additional vocabulary. Students will enjoy filling in their own word choices to create a fun story on each page. Includes 44 activities, plus teaching notes. Student activity pages are in Spanish; teaching notes are in both Spanish and English.  
*More information: [www.languageland.co.uk](http://www.languageland.co.uk)*

**Language Land** is a small family run business who specialises in stocking high quality educational language products. Their current range includes English, French and Spanish, they will soon be adding German, Italian and Portuguese!  
Most of their products are aimed towards children but are equally suitable for adults. Language Land products will help you and your family learn a language in a fun way, whether it be your mother tongue or an additional language.  
*More information: [www.languageland.co.uk](http://www.languageland.co.uk)*
Keep language learning FUN all year long!

Learn In Your Car For Kids (Available in French & Spanish)

Recommended for ages 7+. Learn a language while in the car or anywhere! Children can learn a language at home or on the go with this fun-filled Activity Pack that includes an audio CD and an activity book that enhances and reinforces the audio program. Laminated pages wipe clean so children can play and practice - over and over again! It is full of games, reusable stickers and an erasable non-toxic marker. This engaging audio program uses a fun, “learn along” approach to teach a language. Children will laugh and learn right along with the characters in this interactive audio program. More information: www.languageland.co.uk

Usborne French Songbook

Recommended for ages 4+. The Usborne French Songbook contains words and music for more than 20 well-known French nursery rhymes, traditional songs and Christmas carols. Each one has an easy-to-play accompaniment for piano or keyboard, simple guitar chords, and clear pronunciation guides to help even the youngest readers to sing confidently. Background information and detailed explanations of each song help readers learn new words as they sing, as well as many fascinating facts about France and the French. In addition, the tunes are available to listen to on the Internet. More information: www.languageland.co.uk

Teach Your Baby Audio CD (Available in French & Spanish)

For Ages 0 to 3 years. Teach Your Baby helps your child learn more than one language during the crucial window of opportunity: The first three years of life! Teaching counting, colors, body parts, animals, clothes and more, Teach Your Baby focuses on concepts and objects which infants can comprehend, instead of abstractions like time, or social greetings. Teach Your Baby helps stimulate a babys neural pathways, build vocabulary, and develop innate grammar understanding - in more than one language! Children learn multiple languages more easily and quickly before age three than at any other time in life, because their brains are rapidly developing. Take advantage of this opportunity, and give your child a head start in life! More information: www.languageland.co.uk
Top picks for the New Year from Language Land

Growing Up With Two Languages - A Practical Guide

This best-selling, easy-to-read guide provides sensible advice and practical help for families whose children are growing up with two languages, and for professionals working with them. It is packed with case studies and examples of how over fifty families around the world are coping with bilingualism. Every family’s situation is different, but there is a good deal that parents can do to make life with two languages easier for their children.

The trials and rewards of life with two languages and cultures are discussed in detail, followed by clear guidance on supporting the child’s linguistic and cultural development.

More information: www.languageland.co.uk

Language Land is a small family run business who specialises in stocking high quality educational language products. Their current range includes English, French and Spanish, they will soon be adding German, Italian and Portuguese!

Most of their products are aimed towards children but are equally suitable for adults. Language Land products will help you and your family learn a language in a fun way, whether it be your mother tongue or an additional language. www.languageland.co.uk
Keep language learning FUN all year long!

Silly Sentences – Spanish Game

Recommended for ages 7+. This unique Spanish language game will help students master sentence construction and fundamental Spanish grammar - while having fun! The game provides practice building sentences, identifying parts of speech, conjugating verbs and checking for agreement of number and gender of nouns. For 2-4 players. More information: www.languageland.co.uk

Spanish Baby

Berlitz Talk and Tunes – Audio CD

Recommended for ages 0 to 3. Baby Talk & Tunes makes each event of the day - waking up, eating, playing and resting - a language-learning experience. It’s an ideal first language programme for babies, with memorable songs, repeatable words and phrases, and teaching tips. This fun educational product includes an audio CD with a sing-along booklet, designed by experts to encourage the language development of the youngest learners. One-of-a-kind audio CD designed by language experts. More information: www.languageland.co.uk

The Complete Lyric Language Audio CD & DVD (Available in Spanish & French)

Recommended for ages 0 to 12. The Lyric Language programs combine original music and bilingual lyrics with the fun of live-action video adventure to introduce children to Spanish vocabulary. The song lyrics, printed on screen and simultaneously sounded out, alternate between English and Spanish to provide instant word comprehension. Children can sing along to practice pronunciation. Subtitles are provided in both English and Spanish. The accompanying teacher’s guide, designed for both monolingual and bilingual teachers, provides reproducible student activity pages. The games and activities may be used to motivate students to pursue a foreign language or to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) while developing multicultural awareness. Includes DVD with a full colour Lyric Book. Also includes an audio CD with all 21 Bilingual songs. More information: www.languageland.co.uk
Raising Multilingual Children
by Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa

Raising Multilingual Children discusses in a compassionate, engaging manner the highly complex issues that a multilingual upbringing takes, taking into account the often difficult choices that we parents have to confront in the process. Using a cooking metaphor, the author describes the necessary ingredients that are necessary for baking a successful multilingual pie. Yet raising multilingual children is not at all a piece of cake, and the author doesn’t try to dish up Bilingualism with sugar coating, either. Instead, she reflects on her own experiences and analyzes complex case studies, provides practical advice and a plethora of resources. This book is highly recommended for parents who seek practical advice in their multilingual situation, who need guidance through rough times, or simply seek an excellent source for practical tips and further resources. If you can handle some wit and humor in addition, you will find this a rewarding reading experience. To order go to: www.greenwood.com

Get ready for Raising Multilingual Children, Part II, which will be available in fall 2007!

Beyond Baby Talk
by Kenn Apel, Ph.D. and Julie Masterson, Ph.D.

This easy to read book is full of information about language development in children. The writing is geared toward parents of young children and takes the reader through each stage, step-by-step. There are wonderful examples and descriptions as well as tips and ideas for how to encourage your child’s language development. It also includes a chapter dedicated to language and culture issues when raising bilingual children. For parents just getting started in raising a bilingual and bicultural child, this chapter would certainly be helpful, encouraging and of value. Parents are encouraged to evaluate and monitor their child’s language development and are taught which external influences have the most impact on their children’s linguistic progress, such as television and cultural styles. This book will also help parents identify basic signs of language development issues which should be addressed with a language expert if necessary. This book is very encouraging to bilingual parents who wish for additional understanding of children’s language development and those who wish to do more to encourage their children with specific activities and support. To order go to: www.asha.org
Games Language People Play
by Jerry Steinberg

When it comes to learning a new language or keeping a second language alive in your home, having games to keep thing fun is essential! Jerry Steinberg is an expert in keeping language fun! In his book are 110 games ranging from beginner to advanced. Each game indicates the language skill, group size, objective, materials needed, a detailed description of how to play each game and additional suggestions. Although these games are intended for teachers in the classroom, they can just as easily be utilized by parents at home and would be a wonderful addition to a language playgroup. The book is written in English so for families who are raising children in a different language, it is necessary to come up with alternative words for the games. For example, in the game titled, “Who Has It,” the forms of the verb TO HAVE are practiced. This game can be used for any language but it may take extra effort to make the game work smoothly for certain languages. However, with so many games listed, it is possible for every family to find games that will work for them. Parents are also encouraged to use this book as a starting point for creating even more games on their own and to adapt them to fit the needs of each of their children. To order go to: www.pippinpub.com

Succeeding in Diversity - culture, language and learning in primary classrooms
By Jean Conteh

As the author states, “This book is for primary school teachers, teacher trainers and students on primary education courses. It is about language and learning, about the ways in which the two interact and the ways in which these interactions are always mediated through, in and by culture.” Parents who have children in school will be interested in what Jean Conteh has to say in this book. It will go a long way in helping them to support their children in their academic environments and will receive encouragement to help establish the necessary bridge between home and school. What are the necessary factors to help bilingual children become high achievers in school? The answer is to be found in the positive interactions and experiences in both home and school which in turn help bilingual children to move confidently between social worlds, cultures and languages in their daily lives. Without these mutually supportive environments, it is easy for bilingual children to move along paths of failure, which unfortunately is often the norm. Sadly, it is rare to find a school system which has put out the necessary effort and research to establish a successful program to support the needs of its bilingual students. “Succeeding in Diversity” should be in the hands of both parents and administrators to finally find answers to these difficult questions. To order go to: www.trentham-books.co.uk
Welcome to the New Year with its fresh breath of starting over, and maybe starting BETTER than last year. New Year’s enthusiasm can brush away the stress of last year’s unmet goals for the “perfect bilingual household” and give you permission to create more realistic ones for 2007.

Consider a resolution to honor you. Take a moment now and validate the complexity of raising bilingual, bicultural children and appreciate what pioneers you are to be consciously choosing to give your children the gift of two (or more) ways to look at and BE in the world. It is a difficult job to stay committed to a bilingual, bicultural life style in a culture which on one hand says it embraces creativity and diversity and on the other hand is so judgmental of those, especially children, who do not fit easily into mainstream expectations.

The Sunday December 3, 2006 Seattle Times had a column by Leonard Pitts Jr., a syndicated columnist in Miami, Florida. Leonard talked about the how the face of the US in 2050 is expected to look like that of Miami today, equal proportions of black, brown and white citizens, many of whom will speak more than one language. He encouraged the reader to stop the hypersensitivity to everything racial and think more about language and culture. He gave the example of a young colleague who when she went to her mother for marital advice got the response “I told you there would be troubles in your mixed marriage, the culture connection is hard”. In this marriage both partners were black. One was born and raised in the US and the other born and raised in Haiti.

Most of you put your emphasis into how your children are doing and feeling, as bilingual minorities in the dominant culture and forget about how YOU are doing and feeling. As a professional counselor I know the biggest predictor of your child’s success as a bilingual, bicultural person is your ability to stay flexible about the way you approach bicultural, bilingual childrearing. Consider a resolution to talk more often and more honestly with your spouse about what are the most important things each of you wants for your child and family in the second language and second culture. It is realistic to be fluid each year about what works and what does not with your child TODAY so the second language is a source of pleasure not constant conflict. Think small and be consistent. Give yourself permission to relax about it. There is always tomorrow and next year to fine tune your strategy on bilingual family life style.

Historically, immigrants to the US, and to most other countries, assimilated quickly and if they taught their children to achieve fluency in their native tongue they did so privately. Our culture has changed to intellectually accept diversity of language and culture but the reality still remains: as openly bilingual families, you have to put up with comments and prejudice. What are the best self esteem boosters for YOU as well as your children? To stay the course as bilingual 21st century pioneers, be easy on yourselves. Consider having a resolution for stress busting when you are tired of being different. Who or what really lifts your spirit? Make the time for yourself and keep that commitment. Then enjoy the New Year!

Harriet Cannon, M.C. is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Consultant in Seattle, WA. You can contact her at harriet@harrietcannon.com or telephone (206) 352-1900
What is it really like to grow up bilingually? What will our children remember when they are all grown up and starting a family of their own? Will they thank us or condemn us, delight in their bilingualism or carry it as a burden? For those of us just starting out on this journey, it is impossible to know. Luckily for us, some of those who took the path before us are willing to share their insights.

Sami Grover not only grew up bilingually, he is also the son of parents who started a publishing house dedicated to bilingualism. He is also the editor of the well-known Bilingual Family Newsletter published by Multilingual Matters. Here he shares with us his thoughts of growing up in a bilingual family.
MLL: Sami, thank you so very much for taking time for an interview! Please start by explaining a little about what bilingualism was like in your home: which parent spoke which language with you and your brother and which language(s) did they speak together? What percentage of time was each language spoken in your home?

SAMI: My mother is Finnish and my father English, but we grew up in England. From an early age, Mum would always speak Finnish with my brother and myself, and Dad learned some Finnish too so we could use it together as a family. I think this was important initially - it showed us that Finnish was important to him too, and it wasn’t just Mum’s “weird language”. As we grew older and started school, English became more prominent, eventually becoming the main family language when we were all together. However, we would still speak Finnish with Mum, and regularly visited our grandparents there, including attending the local village school for a number of months. These “language baths” usually strengthened our abilities in the Finnish language, and our enthusiasm for Finnish culture grew also.

MLL: Were your parents consistent in their languages? Did they ever switch languages with each other or with you children? Did they speak with you in a different language when in public or with other friends and family members?

SAMI: They were pretty consistent, but they didn’t impose any absolute rules. Sometimes when we came home from school, excitedly speaking English, Mum would allow us to tell her about our day naturally, then gradually steer us towards Finnish. Other times she did use little tricks like pretending not to understand.

When we had friends over, Mum would still often speak Finnish to us, but she would try to translate for the other kids, and even get them involved by teaching them a few simple sentences. Some of my old school friends still great Mum in the street in Finnish.

MLL: What are your earliest memories of being a bilingual? Do you remember there being any confusion in your mind about this?

SAMI: It was always pretty natural for me to speak two languages. I was probably lucky in that I was the second child, so my brother already set a good example. We were also in regular contact with other bilinguals, as there was a strong Finnish community in Bristol where I grew up, and Mum and Dad’s work in publishing bilingual research brought us into contact with many international adult role models, as well as their families.

MLL: Do you remember ever rebelling against one or the other language? Did you have a specific preference toward one language? What did your parents do to help you deal with these situations?

SAMI: I do remember one family holiday when my brother and I talked excitedly with Dad for days about typical boy’s stuff - cars, trains etc. whilst barely acknowledging mum’s Finnish interjections. I am not sure if this was more about gender or language, though the impact was the same. In the end Mum burst out in tears, exclaiming: “That’s it. From now on we’ll speak only English. I’m not letting language come between us!”

My brother and I were shocked - we couldn’t imagine Mum speaking to us in English, and forcefully told her so. We probably went straight back to talking about trains with Dad, but I think the message got through.

Overall, I think Mum and Dad worked really hard to find cultural references that we would find exciting - ice hockey, skiing and, later on, Finnish punk rock all served as a means to keep us engaged with Finland and its language.

MLL: As you got older, tell us a little about what it was like to be a bilingual? Were there specific ages where you felt especially embarrassed? Were there ages when you felt special?

SAMI: I do remember occasionally feeling embarrassed when our family would speak Finnish in public. However, this didn’t last too long - most of my friends seemed impressed with the fact we came from Father Christmas country, and usually showed off that we could ice skate and ski. Mum would usually bring in a ginger bread house to school at Christmas, and this was sure to grab my classmates’ attention. Fortunately she didn’t try this when we were 13, but we soon revived the tradition when we had passed the most awkward teenage years. Some friends have since emailed Mum for the recipe, and, in keeping with my hippy tendencies, this year my fiancée and I intend to build a gingerbread ecohome - complete with solar panels and a compost heap!

MLL: What are some of your fondest positive childhood memories regarding your bilingualism? And do you have negative ones that you can share with us?

SAMI: Probably my fondest memories relate to visits to Finland, and the close and loving relationship we have had with our grandparents and extended family, many of whom do not speak English. It is hard for me to imagine not being able to talk politics with my granddad, or to understand him swearing at George W. Bush on the telly. Likewise, my Grandmother’s stories of her childhood and her
loving laughter will always stay with me. Who knows, had we not learnt Finnish, we may well still have been close, but I think it would have been harder.

I don’t remember many deeply negative experiences. I do remember wishing we didn’t have to attend Finnish Saturday School when all our classmates were playing football (or lazing around in bed!), but as childhood traumas go, I’d say that’s pretty mild.

**MLL:** Did you learn to read and write in both languages? If so, how did you learn this in the non-community language?

**SAMI:** I learned to read in Finnish first, mainly through my Mum, but our grandparents would also send books and stories, and later we attended Saturday school. This did cause a little confusion for me at first when I started to read in English, as the Finnish language is spelt very phonetically. I just couldn’t understand why “telephone” would not have the letter “f” in it, or how “pie” and “sky” could rhyme. This soon cleared up though with a bit of extra attention. I think Mum and Dad were pretty good about explaining to our teachers what the possible causes were, and we were blessed with teachers who didn’t mind a little parental input.

**MLL:** Did you travel to your family’s second country often? Did you ever travel there alone? Did you ever live there and/or go to school there? If so, what was this like?

**SAMI:** As mentioned above, we traveled often as a family and, when I was about 7 or 8, my brother and I spend 4 months there attending school. I think this was a very important and formative part of my life - learning the language, but also learning how to be a typical Finnish boy. I’m not sure whether Mum was delighted or horrified at some of the language we picked up from the ice hockey rink!

**MLL:** Do you have plans to raise your children bilingually? If so, what will be the languages and do you have a plan for how you will go about this?

**SAMI:** I would love to raise my children bilingually. However, which languages that will be in may be difficult. My fiancée is American, and we live in an area with a large Spanish speaking population. I would love to learn Spanish myself, and would be keen for my children to learn. I would also like them to feel close to both England and Finland, and to speak Finnish, but I must admit that English is still my first, emotional language. I find it hard to imagine speaking only Finnish with them. I am also aware how much time it takes to produce fully fluent bilinguals - I am not sure I will want to spend my Saturdays tutoring Finnish, when I am usually involved in some do-gooding treehugger activities! I will certainly teach my children some Finnish, and am sure that Mum and Dad will help out considerably, but it remains to be seen exactly what the language mix will be. There is, of course, the added complication that Jenni, my fiancée, wants children with “cute little English accents”. You say tomato...

**MLL:** In what ways do you believe being raised bilingually formed you into a fundamentally different kind of person than someone who was not raised bilingually?

**SAMI:** It is difficult for me to separate languages from the rest of my life, so I am never quite sure what specific affect bilingualism has had on my life. I think it certainly gave me an interest in languages, and possibly even improved my language skills - I have since studied Danish and German, and seem to pick up other languages fairly easily. I also have pretty good communication skills in general which may, in part, be due to an increased awareness of language. I also feel that my parents brought us up to be very internationally minded, respecting other cultures and traditions, and being open to different ways of doing things - this was probably enhanced by bilingualism, though I am sure it is possible to be closed-minded AND bilingual (and I do a good job of being just that sometimes too!). I am equally sure that there are many very open-minded monolinguals out there.

Of course, there are also the very concrete results of my bilingualism, namely that it led me to join my parents company for a number of years and work on publications about linguistics and bilingualism, and to edit the Bilingual Family Newsletter (www.bilingualfamilynewsletter.com) which I still edit today.

**MLL:** What would you recommend to families around the world who are raising children bilingually? What are some tips that you’d like to pass on to help them keep bilingualism alive in their homes?

**SAMI:** Make it fun. If you allow it to become a battle, then you’ll probably lose. That isn’t to say you shouldn’t sometimes insist on rules, but you should also try to inspire and excite children about language learning. And don’t worry too much if you don’t achieve 100% balanced bilingualism - it is much better that children have some knowledge that they can later pick up on and improve. It is more important that they have a positive overall image of their other culture, than that they are completely fluent, despite being forced to learn something that they don’t feel is relevant or interesting. I think it is also important to listen to your kids and find out what they are most interested in about the other culture. Some kids will find the national sport fascinating, others may be inspired by nature, while others may be more interested in art, food or music. Letting your kids explore their culture for themselves and genuinely get excited about what they find is, I’d imagine, one of the most inspiring experiences that intercultural parents can have.

**MLL:** Any final thoughts, tips, advice or perspective you’d like to share?

**SAMI:** Only to go for it! It may feel tough at times, but I can certainly say that I am extremely grateful that my parents continued through all the difficult stages.

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Sami is the editor of the Bilingual Family Newsletter: [www.bilingualfamilynewsletter.com](http://www.bilingualfamilynewsletter.com) published by Multilingual Matters: [www.multilingual-matters.com](http://www.multilingual-matters.com)
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A Parents’ and Teachers’ Guide to Bilingualism
By Colin Baker

The style of the book is to pose questions that people most often ask about raising bilingual children. Straightforward answers follow, written in direct, plain English. This book is perfect for families who are just getting started as well as those who have experience. Families around the world are sure to find questions and answers which speak to the needs of their family’s current needs as well as future dilemmas and situations. The contents cover the following: 1. Family questions, 2. Language development questions, 3. Questions about problems, 4. Reading and writing questions, 5. Education questions and 6. Concluding questions. ISBN-13: 9781853594557, £11.95/US$19.95

Books for Parents

Language Strategies for Bilingual Families, The One-Parent-One-Language Approach, by Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert

This book looks at how families can support and increase bilingualism through planned strategies. One such strategy is the one person-one language approach, where each parent speaks his or her language. Over a hundred families from around the world were questioned and thirty families were interviewed in-depth about how they pass on their language in bilingual or trilingual families. The author’s writing style makes this book a very easy read and provides support and research in ways that families around the world can easily put into practice. ISBN-13: 9781853597145, £11.96/US$22.36

Books for Reference

Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education, by Colin Baker and Sylvia Prys Jones

Don’t let the title of “encyclopedia” make you think this book isn’t for you! If you have ever wanted to learn more about bilingualism, this is the book to have on your shelf. It not only explains the details of bilingualism in a way that families around the world can understand, it includes colorful graphs, diagrams, photos and more. This encyclopedia is divided into three sections: individual bilingualism; bilingualism in society and bilingual education and the book concludes with a comprehensive bibliography on bilingualism. ISBN-13: 9781853593628, £79.20/$135.96

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This book provides not only a comprehensive discussion of bilingualism, including definitions on who is bilingual and multilingual, but also of bilingual education worldwide. In a compact and clear style, bilingualism at individual, group and national levels are discussed. The nineteen chapters cover the crucial issues and controversies concerning language minorities and bilingual education, including: the development of bilingualism in infancy and childhood, bilingualism and ‘intelligence’, bilinguals’ thinking skills, bilingualism and the brain, effective teaching and learning methods in bilingual classrooms. ISBN-13: 9781853598654, £15.96/$27.96

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All children learn at least one language.

Many children around the world learn more than one language and they do this in different ways. Some children learn two, or more, languages from birth. Other children begin to learn a second language when they go to daycare or preschool and an increasing number of children learn a second language in immersion programs when they start school. In this article, I focus on children who learn two languages from birth, or shortly after birth. I focus on children who learn two languages and do not comment on children who learn more than two. In other words, I focus on children who have two first languages.

Learning two languages from birth occurs when parents speak different languages and decide to use their different languages to raise their child. In other families, the parents may speak the same language, but it is different from the language used in the community at large; for example, Spanish- or Chinese-speaking parents in the U.S. These parents might decide to use only Spanish or only Chinese at home while the child is exposed to English with most people they encounter outside the home. In yet other cases, children may be under the care of caregivers who speak a language that is different from that of their parents; for example, English-speaking parents in New York City who employ Spanish-speaking nannies to care for their child during the day while the parents are at work. Or, the source of the other language might be grandparents who speak a heritage language that is not spoken widely in the child’s community. Raising children bilingually raises lots of questions. I have tried to answer some of those questions below. It is important to emphasize that my suggestions below are very general and do not necessarily apply to all situations for all parents and children. Ultimately, each family must make the best decisions for themselves. The comments that follow do not concern cases where children are learning one language at home and another language in school. This is another topic.
1. Is it a good idea to raise my child bilingually?
There are many good reasons for raising children bilingually. First and foremost are personal and family reasons. If members of the immediate family or extended family include people who speak other languages, then it is a benefit for everyone if your child speaks their languages. This is especially true if some family members speak only one language and might be cut off from communication with your child if he/she does not learn their language.

The advantages of being bilingual or multilingual go beyond the family. Research has shown that children who are fluent in two languages also have cognitive advantages in comparison to those who speak only one language. For example, they are better at solving problems that involve focusing on relevant information while ignoring irrelevant information. Even bilinguals who are 60 or 70 years of age demonstrate these kinds of advantages.

Clearly, there are also advantages that come from knowing other languages when you child is old enough to read and write and use computers. There is a wealth of information available in print, electronic and other media nowadays. The potential for accessing all that information is much greater for those who know more than one language and are limited for those who know only one. Of course, knowing a language like English is important because it is the most widely used second language in the world. It is widely used for communication about science, politics, financial matters, education, and other topics, and is used extensively on the internet as well as in print and on radio, television, and so on. People who speak additional languages along with English have access to many more of these sources of information than those who know only English.

Finally, there are many personal advantages from knowing additional languages. There are lots of job opportunities in international businesses and governments that require competence in two or more languages. Large international businesses need well educated bilinguals to work in the global market place; governments need multilinguals who can work in embassies and government offices around the world; and many other sectors of the economy (such as education, science) have job opportunities for those who are bilingual. Travel opportunities are also much greater for those who speak additional languages.

2. Is it normal for children to learn two languages at the same time?
Based on the number of children around the world who are raised speaking more than one language, bilingual acquisition is probably more “normal” than monolingualism. It has been estimated that there may be more children who grow up learning two or more languages than children who learn only one. More importantly, there is no scientific reason to think that young infants’ brains are equipped to learn only one language in early childhood. In fact, there has been a lot of research on infants and young children who are learning two languages from birth, and these studies show that children go through the same basic milestones in language acquisition as those who learn only one language. Bilingual children begin to babble at the same time as monolingual children; they say their first words at the same age as monolingual children; they start to produce multi-word sentences at the same time; and so on.

There are differences, of course, between bilingual and monolingual children. The learning task for bilinguals is much more complex and this sometimes may result in short delays or small differences in learning. For example, studies have found that 15 month old infants learning two languages may be delayed by 2 or 3 months in their ability to distinguish new words that that sound similar to each other (e.g., “bit” vs. “bet”) in comparison to monolingual children. But, in the long run, this short delay has an insignificant effect on bilingual children’s overall learning. In fact, researchers suggest that this delay may be helpful for children who hear and must learn words from two languages with different sounds and sounds. It is a kind of flexibility that leaves them open to the greater diversity of words in two languages than monolinguals hear in only one.

Bilinguals can differ from monolinguals even into adulthood – they may pronounce words in slightly different ways; they may use unusual words from time to time; or they may construct sentences in different ways at times. Simply put, bilinguals have more language skills at their disposal and they use them in ways that may distinguish them from people who know only one language.
3. Will my child become confused if we use two languages in the home?

There is absolutely no evidence that children get confused when parents use both languages in the same sentence (or utterance) – what is referred to as code-mixing or code-switching. As long as most people in the child’s family and community use only one language at a time, the child will learn that this is the appropriate way to use their two languages. There is a lot of research showing that even children in the earliest stages of bilingual development know how to use their languages separately, even with strangers they have never met before. If children are growing up in families and communities where two languages are often mixed in the same sentences or conversations, then, of course, children will learn these patterns of mixing. This makes sense because mixing is useful in their community. If the norm in the community in general, however, is to keep the languages separate, then children will learn and use this pattern.

4. Should I worry if my child mixes languages?

Mixing languages in the same sentences or conversations is perfectly normal – all bilinguals do it, even adults. This phenomenon has been studied extensively in children and adults. Research on children has shown that most bilingual children keep their languages separate most of the time. When they mix it is often to fill in gaps in their vocabulary in one or the other language. Bilingual children rarely know exactly the same words in both languages and, as a result, they might use a word from one language while speaking the other language because they do not know the word in the language they are using. Sometimes bilingual children mix words in their two languages because there are specific concepts or meanings that can be expressed easily in one language but not the other. If a child wants to express that meaning or concept, she will have to use the word from the language that it belongs to even if it means mixing languages. In most cases, this strategy works because often the adults in the child’s life know both languages too. As bilingual children get older, they mix in order to express their bilingual identity when they are with other bilinguals. Bilingual adolescents and adults often mix with other bilinguals because it is who they are. In the same way, people who speak specific dialects of a language will use that dialect with others who speak it in order to express their common identity. Mixing does not mean that children are confused or impaired; they are simply using all of their language resources to express themselves.

Yet other research on code-mixing by children has shown that even their mixed sentences are grammatically correct most of the time. For example, if a child inserts a word from one language saying something in the other language, he will insert the word in a place in the sentence that is grammatically correct according to both languages. Or if a child switches from one language to the other partway through a sentence, she will do it at a point in the sentence that is perfectly normal – all bilinguals do it, even adults. This phenomenon has been studied extensively in children and adults. However, bilingual children may show delayed or even incomplete development in one of their languages if their exposure to that language is too limited. It is clear that children learning two languages at the same time do not need as much exposure to each language as monolingual children get for their one. However, there is a minimum level of exposure below which the development of that can be delayed and incomplete. We do not have solid scientific evidence to tell us what that minimum amount of exposure is. Our best guess at this time is that bilingual children must be exposed to a language during at least 30% of their total language exposure if their acquisition of that language is to proceed normally. Less exposure than this could result in incomplete acquisition of that language.

It is common to find that the vocabulary of preschool bilingual children is less than that of monolingual children if you examine each language separately, even if the bilingual child’s exposure to both languages is divided equally (50:50). However, if you examine their total vocabulary in both languages by counting all words for different concepts regardless of what language they are in, bilingual children have vocabularies that are the same size or even larger than those of monolingual children. Early differences in vocabulary between bilingual and monolingual children may be due to several factors, none of which are signs of deficit or impairment. For example, all children have limited memory capacities and, thus, all children initially have limited vocabularies. Because bilingual children must share their limited memory with two languages, they can store fewer words in each language than monolingual children, but the same number, or more words when you consider both languages. Another explanation of bilingual children’s smaller vocabularies in each language is related to the learning environment. Many bilingual children do not have totally equivalent vocabularies in both languages because they often learn each language from different people and/ or in different settings. If these people talk about different things, the child will learn vocabulary in each that is specific to what is being talked about. This can persist even into adulthood and represents a relatively minor problem for most bilinguals.
6. **Will my child’s grammar suffer?**

As we have already seen, bilingual children who have adequate exposure to both languages exhibit the same pattern of grammatical development as monolingual children and they go through the various stages of grammatical development as monolingual children. They also can keep their two grammars separate so that they avoid using the grammar of one language while speaking the other language. Children who get too little exposure to one of their languages may not acquire complete grammatical competence in that language and, in these cases, they may use the grammar of their stronger language to express themselves in their weaker language. This is often the case for children who acquire a second language in school. Of course, the level of sophistication that children acquire in the grammar of each language will depend on the level of sophistication of the language that people around them use. This means that it is a good idea for parents, other caregivers, educators, and others in the community to provide enriched as well as continuous exposure in each language.

7. **Should we use the one-parent, one-language (OP/OL) rule in our home?**

Parents are often told that they should use the one-parent, one-language rule in the home because it ensures that their children will not get confused by hearing their parents use both languages at the same time. There is no evidence that following this rule helps children keep their two languages separate. As was said before, as long as most people in the child’s life use only one language at a time, the child will also learn to keep their two languages separate. The one-parent, one-language rule is a useful strategy for parents to use with their children to ensure that their children get adequate exposure to both languages; otherwise, there might be a tendency to favor one language over the other. The OP/OL rule helps to make sure that this does not happen.

In some families, the OP/OL rule may not be the best strategy. For example, if one of the languages the child is learning is not spoken by anyone outside the family, then it may be a good idea for both parents to use only that language. This will ensure that the child gets sufficient exposure to it to acquire it well. If children go to daycares or pre-schools where the societally-dominant language is used or if they have neighborhood friends who speak the societal language, they will get lots of exposure to the societal language. As a result, they will most certainly acquire full competence in that language because everyone around them uses it. Emphasizing the non-societal language in the home may be the best strategy to adopt in families that speak a minority language that is not widely used outside the home.

8. **What about children with language impairment? Is it a good idea for them to learn two languages at the same time?**

Children with language impairment are children who have difficulty acquiring the vocabulary, grammar and conversational skills of language in comparison to typically developing children. These children’s learning difficulty is restricted to language learning because they usually have normal cognitive development, no obvious neurological impairments, and normal socio-emotional and perceptual development. Children with language impairment often experience difficulty and even failure in school because the linguistic demands in school are too great. It is commonly thought that children with language impairment should only learn one language because learning two exceeds their language learning capacity and could result in even greater impairments and delays.

We do not have as much research on children with language impairment who are raised bilingually as we would like. However, the research evidence that we do have suggests that children with language impairment can become learn and use two languages fluently despite their impairment. They exhibit language impairments in both languages, but their impairments...
are of the same nature and magnitude as those of monolingual children with impairment. At the same time, they develop proficiency in two languages. At present, there is no scientific evidence to suggest that children with language impairment should be limited to only one language on the grounds that this will facilitate their language learning and avoid language difficulties. Raising children with language impairment bilingually is especially important in families and communities where knowing two languages is important and where not knowing one of the languages would restrict the child’s interactions with other family members or with members of their community.

9. **Are there circumstances when raising children bilingually is not a good idea?**

It may not be a good idea to raise children bilingually if parents cannot provide the learning environment that is needed to support the development of both languages. For example, take a family for whom English is the dominant language of both parents and they live in a community where another language is spoken. If they are living in this community for only a short period of time because one of the parents has a short-term job placement there, it may not be worthwhile for the child to learn the new language since they will not have enough exposure to the language to really learn it. Recall that children need long-term exposure to language if they are to develop full competence.

In a related vein, raising children bilingually may not be advisable if exposure to one of the languages is going to be interrupted or inconsistent – because the family moves a lot or because of changes in the composition of the family that will result in a loss of someone who is the primary speaker of that language. Young children often react badly to inconsistent or irregular exposure to language; they like consistency. Thus, if parents decide to raise their child bilingually, they should do so only if they can provide continuous and extended exposure to both languages.

Also, it may not be a good idea to raise children bilingually if at least one parent or child caregiver in the family does not speak each language fluently. In such cases, the parents may lack sufficient competence to provide the enriched language exposure the child needs to develop full competence. If there is a child caregiver who can supplement the parents’ use of their weaker language and if that caregiver is with the child for sufficient periods of time during the week, then the parent’s incomplete competence in the language may not be so serious.

In sum, it is not a good idea to start raising children bilingually if you cannot keep it going or if you lack the linguistic competence yourself to nurture your child’s language development. This caution does not apply to children who are attending bilingual or immersion programs where a second language is used for instruction for an extended period of time. These programs are very effective ways of helping your children become bilingual.

10. **What do I need to do to make sure my child will learn both languages fully?**

As we have seen, learning two languages in infancy and early childhood is as natural as learning only one language. Young children have the capacity to acquire full competence in two languages. While this is true, it is also true that the level of competence and the range of competencies that children acquire in each of their two languages depend critically on the learning environment. Children need continuous, sustained, and enriched exposure to both languages if they are to acquire full competence in both. Parents must take whatever steps they need to ensure that their child is actively exposed to both languages preferably on a daily basis for a sustained and continuous time period. Active exposure means that children not only hear other people using each language, but they are actively involved in using each language. Children with only passive exposure to language, by overhearing adults for example, or watching TV, will not develop the ability to use the language proficiently. If children are to develop competence expressing themselves in two languages, they must be actively engaged in using both languages with others who know those languages.

Motivating children to use both languages can sometimes be the biggest challenge in raising children bilingually. This is especially true when it comes to using a language that is not used widely outside the home. Often young children prefer to use the language that other children around them are using and they may
hesitate to use the “family” language if it is not used by their friends. In these cases, parents must devise strategies to motivate their child to use the language – for example, by creating playgroups with other children who speak the language or by visiting relatives who speak the language. Otherwise, the child may not see the value in using it and may even feel embarrassed using it. Parents should not be discouraged if children do not use both languages early in development. Some children, even monolingual children, take longer to get started and are not as vocal as other children. It does not mean that switching to only one language is advisable. Patience and effort will pay off when children grow up and have the benefits of being bilingual.

Further reading suggestions:

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Have you given any thought to biliteracy or multiliteracy? These are probably not the first things that come to mind between your trips to the grocery store and failed attempts to explain what sharing means to angry siblings.

**NOW is the time to start thinking and planning.** What do you envision for your children? Do you want your children to be able to read and write in your language? Do you have dreams of sitting in the living room with your children discussing your favorite authors?
The question is: How will you go about making this happen?

Will you send your children to a bilingual or immersion school? Perhaps a Saturday school or an afterschool program? Most likely, if you want your children to be biliterate or multiliterate, you will need to take on the task yourself.

In this issue of Multilingual Living Magazine, we will share the expertise of Tracy Tokuhama-Espinosa as she guides us along this path.

Don’t let fear or worry keep you from helping your children read and write in your language! The time your children spend with you at home reading and writing is absolutely essential to literacy in more than one language!
Learning to read is an exciting time in your child’s life, doing this in more than one language is doubly so!

Something that zealous parents should remember, however, is that while speaking more than one language is widespread (most of the world does so), reading and writing skills are not as common. To make matters even more complex, learning to read and learning to write are complimentary, but distinct skills in the brain. The following is a summary of key ideas related to multiliteracy skills (for more detailed information, see Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa’s *The Multilingual Mind*, 2003, Praeger Press).

To be a good reader in two or more languages, a child must give time and practice to each. This is different from oral skills as learning vocabulary in the first language usually transpires into increased vocabulary in the second language; the same spin-off benefits do not exist for reading and writing, however. Having said this, a child with strong oral skills in Spanish and English, who then learns to read in Spanish, has a very good chance of becoming a good reader in English as well—but it is not automatic! Each language has to be given time to develop.

According to linguists, on average, it takes a child about two years to reach native-language speaking levels in a second language, but 5-7 years to reach academic written equivalency (see table).

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There are five basic steps to assuring multiliteracy skills (being able to read and write in more than one language):

1. **Understand** the use of the written word
2. **Learn** the phonemic alphabet
3. **Acknowledge exceptions** in sound to letter relation
4. **Acknowledge exceptions** between languages
5. **Practice:** Familiarity, Repetition and Frequency

Let’s look at these steps in the context of a fictitious situation: Jane is an American married to a Spaniard, living with their two children in Spain. She speaks English, her husband Spanish. Their four-year-old son, Juan, goes to a Spanish preschool. Juan is beginning to learn the vowels, recognizing the written letter and also the sound.

In an ideal situation, Juan’s mother, Jane, has been reading and speaking to him in English since he was born. At around three or so when Juan began showing a natural curiosity for letters she encouraged this interest and helped him label the symbols that corresponded to letters using her native English. (If she sees a sign that says *pescado* she can tell Juan that it starts with a “pee,” not “peh” as in Spanish.)

There are many ways natural curiosity about language manifests itself. For example, Juan might see a “P” in a billboard, newspaper or book and ask, “hey mom, is that my letter?” When my youngest was three, I remember him telling me he “read” the McDonald sign, while a four-year old friend accompanying us said “That’s nothing,” as she pointed to the four circles which are the Audi car logo, “this says a-u-d-i!” This sophisticated matching of symbols (logos) to words (concepts) is a huge first step towards building literacy skills. At this stage, children learn that written language can be used to label things, and especially, to record information, such as in stories, or making lists.

**1. Understand the use of the written word and 2. Learn the phonemic alphabet.**

Ideally, Juan starts pre-school in Spanish with a working knowledge of pre-literacy skills in English *already in place*. Then, when Juan begins to learn letters and their corresponding Spanish sounds at school his mom continues to read in English at home, but stops (temporarily) explicitly teaching the names of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds in English. Why? It is very hard for a child to learn biliteracy skills simultaneously, especially from two different trusted sources: “But, my mother says something different,” or “My teacher corrected me and said it was like this…” When the child is slightly older and has a cognitive understanding of the different languages (can label them by name), then mom can begin again to point out that “yes, in Spanish we say ‘eee’ but in this English word the letter ‘e’ sounds like ‘ehh’. This helps the child with understanding not only the exceptions in the letter sound to symbol correspondence, but also the exceptions between languages. It is important to note that most consonants are very close, and that the exceptions are usually found in the vowels (a,e,i,o,u). If Juan’s mother has not yet taught him the phonemic alphabet in English before he starts learning Spanish,
she should not try to do so until he (1) gains a firm grasp on the Spanish alphabet and (2) can clearly label and distinguish between Spanish and English. She should, however, continue to strengthen Juan's mother-tongue vocabulary by reading to him in English frequently.

5. Practice, Familiarity, Repetition and Frequency

As noted above, good readers read a lot, and give time to each of their languages. My daughter learned pre-literacy skills in English with me before she started reading in German at school in the first grade. About two years later she told me it was “too bad” she had never learned to read in Spanish (her father’s language). When I asked her why she thought she couldn’t read in Spanish she said because she had “never had a class in it.” Excitedly, we took advantage of this opportunity and my husband began to read more with her in Spanish, pointing out the sound to symbol correspondence, while I explicitly pointed out that the vowels in Spanish were very similar to those in German (which she found easy by that point). She began to read in Spanish more fluently. We lived in Switzerland at the time, and Spanish books were expensive and not commonly found. We had more English books available than anything else (thanks to my mother! And the nearby American Library), and so she spent more time reading for pleasure in English than in Spanish or German. When she got to the third grade, however, German began to dominate based on the amount of school reading. Spanish picked up four years ago when we moved to South America. Because of the equal amounts of opportunity (country, school and parental presence), availability of resources (books in all languages), and personal motivation (friends and relatives who highly recommended X book in x language), she now reads at or slightly above age level in these three languages: Practice, familiarity, repetition and frequency were vital factors. Her writing skills, however, are another story.

Because all of her schooling is in German, I would have to say this is her superior written language. To my chagrin, her English spelling is still pretty atrocious, but as English and Spanish are now also required in school as subjects, I find she accepts corrections from her teachers better than from her parents and her writing is improving here as well. An additional factor in writing that did not exist when “we” were kids is the computer. My daughter argues endlessly about the unnecessary need to learn to spell (“the computer can do that later”). To her credit, her teachers (English, Spanish and German) always comment on her sophisticated content—just before they slam her awful spelling. I have faith, however, that with time (practice, familiarity, repetition and frequency) her writing skills will also blossom.

Are you a third culture kid?

“Did you live abroad for a longer period of time when you were a child or a teenager?”

“Are you a multilingual who has learned various languages with ease as you moved from country to country, discarding and picking up languages as you move?”

“Do you have a problem with the question “Where are you from?” and find that you usually embark on a lengthy description of your life, instead of giving a one-word answer?”

“Do you adapt easily and with enthusiasm to other cultures, yet feel you are not really at home anywhere?”

“Do you feel more comfortable hanging out with an international crowd or with people who have lived overseas because “they understand you better” than with people who’ve lived in one place their whole lives?”

“Are you constantly yearning for home, yet when you are there, you suddenly feel like leaving again?”

“If you are in your “home” country and you hear the sound of another language, are you secretly delighted and do you want to get closer to hear it better?”

“Do you cling to your multiple identities and like to switch nationalities and patriotic affiliations depending on where you live?”

“Do you sometimes feel sad because you never really seem to “belong” anywhere?”

If you’ve answered “yes” to some or even all questions above, you are probably a Third Culture Kid!
Who are Third Culture Kids?

Moving abroad and living outside of our “home” culture for a while is, in our increasingly globalizing world, no longer unusual. Out of this experience rises a group of people who are rooted not only in one culture, but in several. Third Culture Kids, or TCKs, spend a considerable part of their childhood abroad. They may be children of diplomats, business people, military or missionary children, children of expatriates or intercultural couples. They are people who grew up in a cross-cultural environment, and who are accustomed to moving between two or more cultural spheres. Dr. Ruth Hill Useem, who first coined the term, defines TCKs as “children who accompany their parents into another society” (1993), stressing the notion of mobility and cross-cultural interaction.

Where does the phrase “third culture” come from?

One way of explaining it is as follows:

Our first culture is the culture of origin, the country where we came from. 
The second culture, the host culture, is the one where we currently live. 
The third culture is that mix of cultures which defines who we are.

In addition to wherever our origin is- a little Japanese, Dutch, American, Australian – we integrate random habits, bits and pieces of traditions, cultures and ways of thinking that we have picked up from the countries where we have lived, which, in total, shapes our third culture identity. This may not be as cut and straightforward for every TCK, and indeed every TCK will experience his or her own entirely individual mix of cultures. Many TCKs will also find that their first culture, “where we came from,” is not at all easy to define, especially if they come from an intercultural marriage.

Yet what all TCKs share is a background of mobility, an intercultural world view, the ability to adapt with ease to diverse cultures and situations. This experience, this common “culture” is what bonds them together. They may not always feel comfortable with people who have only lived in one place. They feel immediately at home in a diverse, international crowd. The merrier the better! TCKs cling to their mixed cultural make-up because this is who they are. Not just “American” or “Norwegian” – but both. Sometimes they like to switch, when in America they are Norwegian, when in Norway they are American. This can be intentional because of an attempt to desperately cling to the other cultural half. Sometimes they refuse to attach a label to themselves altogether. Sometimes, but not always, this can result in sadness, isolation, and the frustrated feeling of never belonging anywhere.

“Where are you from?” and “Where is home?”

To many TCKs, the notions of identity, as well as “home,” are truly complicated. Many TCK’s may never have actually lived at “home”, if we define “home” where the parents grew up prior to becoming expatriates. The dreaded question of “Where are you from?” therefore, may seriously annoy, embarrass, or bore us. Many of us delve immediately into a long-winded autobiographical anecdote: “I am half Japanese, half British, grew up in Australia but am currently living in France, but not for long, we are about to move to Finland.” Other people may reply to the question “Where are you from” with “When?” Yet again others, especially children, may simply reply with a shrug: “I don’t know.”

Returning home, TCKs may come to realize that they don’t belong there, or don’t really seem to fit in. Upon returning home, they often experience reverse culture shock. Finally at home, they may discover that this is the least place where they want to be, suddenly yearning to leave again, wanting to explore new horizons, new cultures.

For adults, the question of identity and home might not be as pressing as it was during puberty. Yet to many it is a question that they deal with the rest of their lives. To some, it may seem like a perpetual grail quest. Others find contentment in the notion that home is where they are now, where their friends
and family are. Home may become a mobile concept, no longer a static concept rooted to one place. Or they may have found contentment in the notion that as citizens of the world, it is ok not to belong anywhere in specific.

At the heart of the TCK-experience is Multilingualism.

Multilingualism is another factor which all TCKs share. Moving from culture to culture, children pick up the language of the respective country with ease. These languages can be discarded as easily as they are picked up, according to the principle easy come-easy go. You speak French at home, Korean because you went to a Korean kindergarten, English because you went to an International School, and Portuguese because you lived in Brazil. Several years later you moved to Indonesia. Suddenly, you seem to have “forgotten” Portuguese, and since you moved to Indonesia you’ve become fluent in Indonesian instead. Juggling with various languages, therefore, is at the core of every TCK’s experience.

Mostly, you are aware of the advantages and proud of your language skills. Often TCKs are perfectly fluent in two or more languages. Yet in frustrated moments sometimes, you seem to think you know only fragments of each, and those spoken with an accent. Sometimes you speak fluently, but seem to lack the ability to read or write properly in a certain language.

TCKs need to remind themselves that it is not the perfect mastery of a language that counts. Their linguistic versatility and ability to pull out languages swiftly as the situation requires is extremely valuable, too.

Switching languages becomes a part of the social chameleon game that TCKs often enjoy playing. When wanting to blend in or pass as a foreigner, you may switch languages. Sometimes it flatters you to be mistaken as a foreigner at home. Sometimes it frustrates and annoys you to be mistaken for an immigrant. Abroad again, you prefer to speak German in public. When you hear a group of Spanish-speaking people you feel tempted to address them in Spanish. And you are always delighted when, at home, you hear a foreign language that you recognize.

All in all: is this good or bad?

While there is certainly a negative side such as a sense of rootlessness and loneliness that some TCKs may battle with throughout their lives, if given the choice, most of them wouldn’t have it any other way. When looking at the positives, TCKs are certainly a very privileged, even elite group who often take their easy adaptability to different cultures and situations for granted. TCKs are the embodiments of a global collection of cultures, ideas, languages and skills. With their global world view and international understanding they are capable of transcending prejudices and biases. Moving from culture to culture, TCKs are the glue that holds the world together.

Alice Lapuerta is an adult Third Culture Kid only now coming to terms with the fact that “home” isn’t always where she thought it was.

Third Culture Kid References

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**BOOKS**


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**Where is Home?**

From a specific locality in time and space to an abstract concept that eludes any kind of definition. What is home? And where is it? Here are some Adult TCKs answers to this deceptively simple, yet often baffling question.

**DINKA**

Defining “home” in the traditional sense (one certain place, one language, one group of people) is not possible for me, I’ve concluded. It would mean that I’d have to be dishonest about who I am by denying parts of it. I call three countries “home” for several reasons, although I prefer to regard the meaning of home in the emotional sense as mostly pertaining to people. What I’m trying to say is that I feel most at home with my family and friends, regardless of where they are and if I’m with them every day. I feel attached to places too, but not to the point where I wouldn’t be able to leave any of them.

Dinka.
Parents’ nationality: Croatian
Countries (lived +12 months): Croatia, Austria, Spain, currently living in the U.S.A.

**MIKE**

Home isn’t necessarily where the heart is. Because the heart is fickle and tends to cling to the past. A past scattered throughout many countries and places. Maybe the heart is seduced by a specific culture of preference, a country, or a people. But that isn’t home. Those are memories. A child simply wants to cling to what they know, a feeling of belonging, a sense of security, which can be found in memories and nostalgia. That isn’t home; it’s the illusion of home.
So where is home? Home is where you belong. Someone told me a story about a man who was in a coma for many years, and he woke up to find everyone he knew has died. He was home, but no one recognised him. “Give me friends, or give me death,” he said. In the end, I’m not sure it matters where you live, as long as you have a home. Which can be found in the people you surround yourself with - your family, your friends, and a community who shares your values. That is home.

Mike.
Parents: France/Ethiopia/Vietnam/Morocco
Countries lived +12 months: France, Reunion, Mayotte, Canada, England.

PREYANKA

Like many TCK’s, I am not really sure where home is. Is it Colorado, where I now live, India, where I was born, or Vietnam, where I grew up? Over the years, I’ve come to realize that I feel most at “home” when I’m with other TCKs and expats. Home, therefore, is not so much a place, but the sense of belonging I feel when I’m around people who understand me. Unfortunately, finding other TCKs can be a difficult because, well, we have no distinguishing marks! This is why blogging (preya.blogspot.com) has come to mean so much to me. Through writing about my experiences, I’ve met so many other TCKs with whom, despite our varied upbringings, I feel I can relate. It’s uplifting to get comments and emails from people from all over the world, to feel connected and to help, even if in a very small way, unite a group of people who are often erroneously thought of as “rootless” and “identity-less.”

Preyanka.
Parents: Indian, American
Countries: India, Thailand, Vietnam, currently living in U.S.A.

BARBARA

Obviously the physicality of my home is where my parents are, and it would be weird to call anything but Slovenia my home, but I don’t really feel it’s my home at all. Home should be some place where you would consider staying longer shouldn’t it? Because home is where you feel comfortable and that’s not the case with me! The consequence of having lived in Kuwait as a child is that I DO NOT have a home! I feel rootless and I am still trying to find a place that I would like to call home. Austria is
obviously not going to be it. After 12 years here I still don’t feel at home. I must say I felt more at home in Kuwait than anywhere else. I’m afflicted with rootlessness ever since we moved to Kuwait.

Barbara,
Parents: Slovenian
Countries: Slovenia, Kuwait, currently living in Austria

My definition of home? It is basically where my parents live. That used to be India, then it was Bangkok and now they live in Kuala Lumpur. So whenever I fly “home”, I fly to Kuala Lumpur. However the place that I am most tied to is Vienna, the place where I was born and raised, and where I spent my childhood. After that I lived in New Delhi, which I could regard as my second home. But I feel comfortable wherever, be it in Japan, the United States, London, Paris, Berlin, etc.

Jan.
Parents: Japanese, Polish
Countries: Germany, U.S.A, Thailand, Malaysia, India, currently living in Austria

People think I should feel uprooted or insecure, but I really don’t. I feel like every experience and environment has given me a facet to my personality that I couldn’t have found anywhere else. I love each of those places, and home is as much in my memories as a real place. I feel like I’m lucky to have as many homes as countries I’ve lived in, with loved ones and friends in each. And thanks to the virtual world, I can keep in contact with them all and can visit them when we travel on holiday! When I say the word “home” though, the place that springs to mind is my grandparents’ house in Normandy, which has always been the idealised image of what home should be in my mind - it’s been permanent all through my childhood (one of the rare places that was!), and it’s a place where our huge and loving extended family gathers regularly, even now, for celebrations of all kinds. It’s home from the spider-webs in the “mouse room” in the attic (the mouse-infested bedroom!) down to the marvellous old tiles on the farmhouse floor.

Lorraine.
Parents: France, England
Countries: England, Egypt, Ivory Coast, Benin, USA, Taiwan and now “settled” - permanently? surely not! - in France
My three-year-old is one confused little man! He has a mom who was born in Russia but grew up in the States, and who insists that he speaks Russian and English. His daddy is 100% Guatemalan (but speaks English fluently), who insists on pounding Spanish and English into his little brain. On top of that, he was born in Costa Rica. So with all this twirling around in his head, he figured he might as well add to the confusion by inventing his own unique language.

My son is at that age when kids are not only muttering a few incoherent words, but are attempting to have full conversations. Since his speech is half-invented and delayed, making it difficult for many people to understand, he feels so frustrated on a daily basis that my heart goes out to him. Surrounded by three languages, he tries hard to express himself by saying words that would best fit the situation. However, when one doesn’t understand him, which is 90% of the time, he screams and cries, repeating the word over and over again until we figure it out, or he finds something else to distract him. As much as I love this stage and the adorableness that goes along with toddlerhood, I can’t help but wish he would finally speak. Not only so he can tell me what he wants at the moment, but more importantly, so he can tell me whether he’s hurt or feeling sick. Regardless of all these problems, our dedication and devotion to maintaining the three languages actively is not going to falter.

In my bi-monthly column Multicultural Mayhem I’ll take you through the difficulties of raising a multilingual child by giving you tips and ideas on how to stay disciplined. The beginnings may be tough, but the rewards are beyond limits—both for you and your child!
“Is your child a little slow?” is a question that no mother wants to hear, especially when her child isn’t. At times I find myself wasting energy trying to explain: “No my son doesn’t have a disability,” and, “No my son doesn’t have communication problems.” What he does have is a trilingual household. Is that so hard to grasp?

Apparently it is.

Living in Costa Rica, meeting bilingual and even a few multilingual children isn’t out of the norm. However, we don’t live too close to the foreigners that could relate to our situation, but rather in a more local environment where the Costa Ricans nod their heads understandingly as we explain that our almost three-year-old processes everything, but with all the confusion in his head has a hard time expressing himself.

This is exactly what happened when we sent him to a local nursery school. A few months back we decided it was time he went somewhere where he could interact with kids his own age. We stressed our situation to his teacher on the first day and she replied with utter joy to be receiving such a unique little child. It took him a while to adjust, but that goes for every child in every corner of the world, and within two weeks he would run to play with the kids.

One day the psychologist of his school asked me for a conference. She said that it was customary for all the parents to come in for a review of their kid’s assimilation to their new environment. At the meeting, my son’s teacher joined us. In unison, the two immediately asked: “Is your son a little slow?” “How do you mean?” I asked defensively. “Does he have speech problems?” “No!” “It’s just that he’s the only one in the whole group who still doesn’t know how to talk? We were wondering if there was something wrong.”

I sat in a state of shock. Did they not participate in our conversation three weeks ago? Did I not tell them specifically that with three languages my son is fully aware of everything but has a hard time getting the correct words out and to compensate for his lack of expression he’s invented his own language to help express himself better? “Umm-hmmm,” they nodded as I repeated myself. Then, as though not hearing a word, psychologist continued, “When did he first start talking?”

“Around eighteen months,” I replied not wanting to deal with the situation anymore. This was not the first time I had people question my son’s odd language and I didn’t find it appropriate that they should be giving me the inquisition.

I left the place with a heavy heart, rethinking all my worries that I initially had by sending him to school in the first place. I, too, had grown up in a bilingual household. My situation was totally different though. I came from Communist Russia to the US when I was six years old during the heart of the Cold War. Needless to say, Russian wasn’t the most favorite language of the decade and I got my fair share of ostracism driving me to reject my heritage and language for over ten years. I felt embarrassed by my background, my family, and anything that would put me in the public’s eye.

My Guatemalan husband comforted me and explained that, first of all, a psychologist’s job is to point out problems so that you go back to them for resolution. Secondly, many people had a long way to go by understanding a more worldly family, and thirdly, does our son look like he is having problems? When I reviewed my kid’s eagerness of going to school and his enthusiasm when I picked him up, I realized that it had nothing to do with him (and us). So instead of getting angry and insulted I decided to expose more of who we were.

One day, the class had to present a farm animal. Our choice was a horse. Unlike the typical collage of horse stuff we presented the horse in three languages. The teacher was thoroughly impressed and enjoyed the free lesson as she proudly tried to pronounce the word horse in Russian for all the other kids to see who my little man was! Two weeks later she asked me if I could teach her some cute words in Russian so she could use them with her kids. The psychologist has yet to come around, she is intent on making my child speak, but I guess with time she’ll come around, too.

Next column: Can You Say Duck In Three Languages?

Marina Kuperman is a Russian-born American, married to a Guatemalan, living in Costa Rica. She blogs at Backpackermom.typepad.com.
With Chinese New Year approaching, readers may want to introduce their children to Asian culture and fables. The following products from Language Lizard will help them explore this part of the world.

Chinese New Year Poster

This poster offers a great way to teach kids about Chinese New Year. Child-friendly illustrations show “Year of the Dog”, “Year of the Ox”, “Year of the Rooster”, etc. The poster is in English with Chinese characters. To order this poster, visit www.LanguageLizard.com.

The Dragon’s Tears

This moving folk story tells how the twenty-four lakes of the River Min came to be called the Dragon’s Tears. When Chin Wah releases a golden fish he is rewarded with the gift of a magic pearl. But this is when his troubles begin… A classic Chinese tale about luck, magic, greed, tragedy and reconciliation has much scope for discussion. This story was written by storyteller and puppeteer, Manju Gregory. It was illustrated by Gua Le, a master of Chinese brush art illustration, a form famous for its spontaneity and energy. This story is available from www.LanguageLizard.com in English with Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese-Traditional, Chinese-Simplified, Czech, French, Gujarati, Japanese, Korean, Panjabi, Portuguese, Serbo-Croat, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese. Best for ages 6+. An audio CD of this story in 7 languages is also available.

Fox Fables

This book offers a perfect introduction to traditional fables. In the first clever Aesop’s fable, The Fox and the Crane, Fox invites Crane to tea but gives her a flat dish so she can’t eat any food. When it is Crane’s turn to invite Fox, what dish does she use? In the second story in this book, Chinese fable King of the Jungle, Tiger thinks he is the king of the jungle but can Fox fool him to save his own skin? This story is available from www.LanguageLizard.com in English with Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Chinese-Traditional, Chinese-Simplified, Croatian, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Panjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Scottish Gaelic, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Turkish, Twi, Urdu, Vietnamese and Yoruba. Best for ages 6-9.

Visit Language Lizard at: www.LanguageLizard.com
When you move to another country, you take your language(s) with you. This article deals with what may happen to your children’s language(s) in a new country, drawing on my own experience as a globe-trotter parent of three multilingual children. Our family started off bilingual in Portuguese (my language) and Swedish (my husband’s language), and became trilingual (with English) since our move to English-speaking countries, first Hong Kong and then Singapore.

Since parents usually express their concerns over their children’s language use around a core of questions and worries, I chose to present the article in dialogue form, with a number of commonly raised issues as headings.
I was offered a great job abroad, where my whole family is welcome. But I’m thinking of rejecting the offer because my children are too old to learn a new language.

The child’s age is irrelevant for purposes of language learning. Motivation is what makes all of us learn whatever we find it useful to learn. A move to a new country, where your children will come to socialise with peers who speak a different language, is one of the major reasons to want to learn a new language. Children, young and old, are like sponges absorbing all kinds of intriguing new experiences, and language is no exception. There is nothing more exciting than being able to understand new, interesting, funny, exotic peers, and thereby gain access to their groups. One added incentive, of course, is the likelihood of coming to master the new language decidedly better than mum and dad, who are less likely to become fully immersed in undertakings involving local languages.

Our children will have to attend a local school. How can they be taught in a language that they are learning at the same time?

A language is a tool, something that you use to do other things with. You learn to use a tool by using it, and the more you use a tool, the better you get at using it. This is also true of languages. Your children may need a kick-start, like ours did. A few months before our move, we hired a private tutor to introduce them to English, their all-new language. We went on with private tutoring a few months into the move too. From then on, their English took off on its own, full speed ahead. It didn’t matter that our children went on not fully understanding what was going on in the classroom for a couple more months. Their native friends sometimes didn’t either, and clearly not for linguistic reasons. But asking, reasoning, expressing bafflement, attempting to explain what went wrong, being told off and praised, sharing ignorance and knowledge in a language, on a daily basis, is definitely the way to make it yours. This is exactly how babies go about learning their languages too.

Why do my children mix their languages all the time now? Aren’t they risking becoming semi-lingual?

Children mix languages for the same reasons that fully grown, fully competent language users do: because different languages offer more, and often more precise, ways of expressing ourselves. Language mixes arise because we find, in words or expressions from other languages, a feeling or an appropriateness to what we want to say which is lacking in our own language. Different languages have different personalities, just like people. You can celebrate Thanksgiving in French, or sing Edith Piaf’s songs in English, but the genuine feeling of the celebration and the songs are not there, because they lack their proper linguistic expression. The biggest headache among translators is the need to match the right feeling, not necessarily the right dictionary suggestion, to the text that they have to render in a different language. Children (and adults alike) simply ignore such finesse. They borrow and mix the right word which comes with the right nuance of meaning instead. Especially if they get kudos for doing so. After all, if all my amigos do it, why not me?

Mixes in fact involve deep knowledge of the languages which are so mixed, and of their systems, be it sound system, grammatical system or their vocabularies. We can only mix things that are clearly differentiated, which means that language mixes provide no evidence of confusion or of deficient linguistic competence. In addition, multilingual children as well as adults mix only when they know that their listeners understand mixed speech. That is, they mix in multilin-
gual contexts, among other mixers. Borrowed words and expressions began their linguistic lives in a new language as mixes. We borrow as and when the need arises, and it is up to us users to decide whether to keep borrowings or discard them. All words were new, once upon a time. It is, besides, becoming less and less realistic to assert that a language is there for the purpose of keeping itself ‘pure’, whatever that may mean, especially in cosmopolitan surroundings. Children and youths, particularly if multilingual, stand for the lion’s share of new words and expressions in the world’s languages, and these are what keep a language alive and usable. Children’s mixes show that they are becoming fully-fledged members of international environments.

And by the way, when you talk about pizza, typhoons, bureaucrats, judokas, robots and smorgasbords in English, are you (i) mixing? (ii) showing signs of semi-lingualism? My children have stopped using our language among themselves.

Welcome to the club... This is precisely how my own family became trilingual, instead of bilingual as planned. Our children, now in their late teens, go on using Portuguese and Swedish with each parent, as always, but English has become their common language. The reason why this happened is that English represents a model which is quite irresistible, in two complementary ways. It is the language of schooling and, more importantly, it is the language of peer bonding. ‘Irresistible’ is the right word: we parents tried all we could think of (yes, including bribes and threats) to exclude English from our home, but we were soon forced to admit that we were fighting a losing battle. So we gave up, and we welcomed English instead. The children use our languages with us, mum’s language and dad’s language, so they can have their own, children’s language too.

We have found no reason to worry about this at all. Many families, where a new language emerged through their children in similar ways and who returned home after their posting abroad, report that the children recovered the home language as their peer language a few months later. School and peer pressure appears to work in the same way at home as abroad. My family are still ‘abroad’, so we’ll see how things develop in due time.

My child now refuses to speak our language. What shall I do?

Human beings always take the easy way out of any situation, be it at work, when socialising or when using language. This is why you say (and perhaps also write) wanna instead of ‘want to’, and didja instead of ‘did you’. Choosing to not use a language is not necessarily a matter of refusal, it may rather be one way of checking out whether there are other, easier, possibilities out there. If there is evidence that you can get away with using one single language, why bother using several? This is why everyone automatically turns to English in international settings, not Mandarin or Portuguese. You ‘can get away’ with English in China, in Portugal and in many other countries.

If the parents switch language according to the child’s uses, and therefore provide evidence that the child needs to use one language only, the family will end up with one language only. This is how monolinguals become monolinguals. It’s up to the parents, not to the children, to decide the family’s language policy. If several languages are deemed relevant, parents must make it clear that this is so through continued use of their own language(s) at home. Try making mental notes of when your child uses the ‘wrong’ language. You may find out that it is when the child just got home from school, with a head full of another language, or when reporting incidents which took place in that language. Different languages associate with different happenings and different experiences, as is also the case in my family. My children ended up spontaneously asking permission to speak English, which was duly granted, to tell us parents what went on in school. That done, usual household business could then proceed in our home languages. Respond to the child in your usual language, ask the child to try to repeat in that language what was just said in another one, help your child along the discovery of alternative means of expression in different languages, explain why it is important to keep the home language(s) in good working condition -- to be able to enjoy grandparents, cousins, friends back home, for example.

One last word.

Worrying about our children, including their language(s), is part and parcel of being a parent. You are not alone, and neither are your children. Let us know about your worries, so we can all learn from one another?

Madalena Cruz-Ferreira hails from Portugal and has lived in Singapore for 12 years, with her Swedish husband and their three trilingual children. She has several publications on child multilingualism, including a book, Three is a Crowd? (Multilingual Matters, 2006). Webpage: profile.nus.edu.sg/fass/ellmcf/ Email: ellmcf@nus.edu.sg
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One step at a time you have found your path, now stay on it! Don’t let yourself lose sight of your goal, even when the going gets tough.

Here are some tips to keep you motivated when the path starts to take an uphill climb.
The key to staying motivated is in finding little gems of success along the path to fluency; a new word here or there, an idiomatic expression or a joke in the target language, the first thank you note written in the second language. Every little bit of progress can and should be celebrated (imagine if it was you learning the new language, wouldn’t each of these steps be cause for joy?).

Siblings can be a wonderful contributing factor to this process as well. The applause from a big sister can work wonders towards encouraging her younger brother to experiment even more with new sounds, words, and eventually sentences and complex ideas.

Finally, motivation can also come from the fast-paced globalized world which now prizes linguistic ability in a way never seen before in history. The marketability, social aptitude, cultural sensitivity, and increased mental flexibility of multilinguals are motivation enough for many, independent of internal home factors.

Whether the initial motivation starts with parents, sibling or society, all contribute to the eventual passion children can development for the role of languages in their lives, and each should be exploited to its maximum potential to keep the enthusiasm high.

1. **Explicitly tell your child how important his/her languages are** (e.g. “Won’t it be great to be able to visit with Grandma and tell her how much you enjoyed the birthday gift she sent?” “Won’t it be fun to play with your cousins next summer [in English]?” “When you know enough Turkish we can read that story together.”

2. **Implicitly hint at the value of knowing more than one language** (“Wouldn’t it be great to play with Alfred next door [who speaks Spanish]?” “Did you know that when you can speak more than one language, more people want to offer you jobs?” “Isn’t it funny that when you know more languages, they say you might live longer because your brain is more active?”

3. **Celebrate every small success your child demonstrates with language** (e.g. each new word, each correct sentence, each attempt at a new structure or joke, etc.)

4. **Involve all the players. Get siblings, grandparents and friends involved in the language-learning goal.** Explicitly ask for collaboration (e.g. “Please only speak to John in French.” “When we visit, would you mind only speaking in English, even though I know you speak perfectly in Japanese as well?”

5. **Language is a full-time job:** Children are very acute at perceiving inconsistencies in strategies. If you have decided that mom will speak English and dad Spanish, then your child’s language acquisition will be stunted by inconsistencies; stick to your guns and stay true to your strategy.

Getting started and staying motivated with raising children in several languages begins with the parent’s own passion and enthusiasm for the task. If the parents are not devoted to the process, the results will show in the language level of the child. Where does this passion come from? Often a parent wants to be sure her child can communicate with relatives in another country. Sometimes a parent wants to guarantee cultural links to his family. Yet other parents are interested in the child’s ability to adapt socially. There are a myriad of reasons to be passionate about one’s languages, and all contribute to the enthusiasm parents have for choosing and staying consistent with a strategy for raising their children multilingually.
Before:  

“Hablando del rey de Roma, por la puerta se asoma.” A German colleague at the language academy in Madrid asked me yesterday how to say this in English. I hadn’t heard the expression before: “If you talk about the king of Rome, he’ll pop his head in the door,” but I assume he means “Speak of the devil...” When I say this, his face lights up. “Oh, like in German!”

Lately I’ve been thinking about these things—idiomatic expressions in English that native speakers just know. I wonder about my son Pedro, soon to be born, who will grow up here in Spain—how will he learn them? I plan to speak to him in English, we will read books and watch videos and play games in English, we will make trips to the States as often as our budget allows; yet it seems inevitable that so much richness of expression will be lost. My husband will use Spanish, as will most everyone else we see regularly, and I can’t help noting that every book read or interaction had in one language takes time away from development in the other language. I built my vocabulary in large part by reading, but if I had to divide my reading time into two languages, would I have twice the vocabulary, or half, in two languages?

Walking home, I am about to cross the street when a car comes barreling down the road in front of me. *Barreling,* I think. What if this word never comes up in our books or videos? What if I never think to use it in front of our son—what will he say when he needs this word? The car was going very fast? I don’t remember the first time I heard it, or indeed any of the times after that. Like so many others, it was just there, part of my language environment, and somehow I picked it up.

Of course there are other things more important than vocabulary. Pedro will be able to communicate in two languages, which will be an asset for work, leisure, and building relationships. He will be familiar with two cultures, even if, as I fear in my more anxious moments, he feels only one of them to be truly his own. These are gifts we will give him, and that is no small thing. Yet I can’t help but mourn somehow the small losses that will accumulate along the way. As a writer, it is a personal bias, similar perhaps to the parent who is fascinated by the rigors of science and mathematics, but whose child gravitates instead to the world of art. Or the professional musician whose children don’t want to learn piano or violin, and instead spend their time playing football, basketball, hockey.

I suppose that if Pedro feels drawn to words, he will naturally find his way there. Maybe he will even add a few more languages into the mix! If instead he is intrigued by other things, that is fine, too. I will do my best to expose him to the world and its words—museums, concerts and plays, walks in the woods, computers, whatever I can. And I will trust that what I give him will be enough—and what he does with it will be up to him.
After (4 years later):

Now, all that angst seems a little bit silly to me (pregnancy hormones, anyone?). After four years as a parent, with two of those years as a mom of two, I’ve come to realize that whatever we hope for our kids is just our vision, and as individuals, each one will end up finding their own way. I knew that before, on some level, (as evidenced by the last paragraph above…) but now I really know it, or at least I’m slowly finding it out. Does the scientist really mourn that her child is an artist instead of a chemist? Probably she is just thrilled to see him find his own passion. Does it really matter if Pedro knows the word “barreling” when there are so many other words, in both of his languages, each with its own layers of meaning?

Still, I have yet to develop the philosophical attitude of some multilingual families, that language is just a tool, and each one will be used in as far as it is necessary for the purpose at hand. To me, language is much more—a vehicle for passing down a culture, a way to share special moments: reading the classic children’s books, reciting nursery rhymes, singing the songs of my childhood with my own kids. And I do all of those things, but when they are older they will be the ones choosing what they want to read (and if they even want to read at all, though I’m doing my best to ingrain the habit) Eventually, it is up to them, and that’s okay.

Indeed, Pedro has been a child with his own agenda from day one. He liked being read to—for about thirty seconds—but then was always up and running off to do something else. For him the many bookcases in our house have been more attractive as climbing structures rather than repositories of knowledge. He was a boy of few words, preferring to explore other areas of development instead. At two, a large part of his vocabulary consisted of the full repertoire of animal sounds, and a few key words thrown in here and there.

Now, at four, he has calmed down quite a bit. Visits to the States and exposure to English at home and through books and videos have brought his English up to speed, though he is still somewhat stronger in Spanish, the majority language. He sometimes enjoys a quiet moment sharing a book, but other times he is still impatient to get up and move. He does like pretending, though, and loves to hear me tell stories, so I do— and then we act them out with his collection of toys. And finally he is starting to appreciate word games like the opposite game, “I say hot, you say …” and the like.

There are times when he is saying something, over and over, and I still don’t understand. Finally I ask him to explain what the word means, or to tell me in Spanish, and usually that helps, but sometimes he just keeps repeating the word, earnestly, urgently, waiting for understanding to dawn. And when I finally get it, “Oh! You mean xxxx!” instead of an exasperated, “Yeah, so what took you so long?” his whole face lights up with the joy of communication.

And it is fun to watch him use language creatively. The other day he was playing with his stuffed rabbit and said “Now I’m going to put it into the not-escaping thing.”

“You mean a cage?” I asked. “Yes!” he replied. I just had to smile. While he is not as verbal as some other kids his age, he often blows me away with his imagination that can transform anything he finds lying around the house into an elaborate game.

On the other hand, my younger son, Elias, who is now two, has an impressive vocabulary and often speaks in complete sentences. He repeats whatever he hears, and manages both languages well. He is also drawn to books, and loves to point out letters and numbers when he sees them somewhere, even recognizing a few by name. Yet he learned to walk at fifteen months to his brother’s twelve, and thus far has shown little interest in scaling the furniture. It just goes to show that each child is different, or as they say in Spanish, “cada cabeza es un mundo,” each head is its own separate world. Right now I am optimistic about both children’s future language abilities, and I am excited to see where their worlds will take them.

Kate MacVean lives in Spain with her husband Santi and their two boys. She is a former columnist for Literary Mama. You can find the archives of her column, Mothering Abroad, here: www.literarymama.com/columns/motheringabroad/archives.html.
Introducing yourself or your children to another language may seem like an enormous challenge that you’re not sure will be worthwhile to attempt. Education about the benefits of bilingualism can help remove the veil of mystery that surrounds language development and learning and can help you to make better, more informed choices.

Some families are bicultural and bilingual in make-up, while others make the choice to learn another language and to offer their children the opportunity of doing so as well. In either situation, there are obstacles to overcome; but there are also mutual, shared interests for those who wish to learn, understand and develop more than one language in their intimate environments or greater social spheres.

Specific problems, depending on your starting point, might include: hesitancy to speak or employ the other language (yourself or your children), passive language use, language confusion, resistance to the language of minor communication in or by society, and refusal to share the other language with a parent or partner who has already been associated with one primary language. Some theorists have also hinted that delayed speech and further language development setbacks can occur when children are simultaneously exposed to two or more languages in their early ages and stages.

Many such problems can be overcome with time, with patience and constructive encouragement along the way; but particular problems can be resolved by courage, perseverance, and by consulting with local foreign language experts, teachers and community resource leaders.

If you are a monolingual adult or a parent who wishes to learn another language, the feat may seem demanding, but it’s never too late to set an example and to learn or study alongside your children.

The following tips on getting started and staying motivated may apply to your particular situation and be useful to grant yourself the chance to learn another language, regardless of your age, mother tongue, cultural background or place of residence.

Getting started—selection criteria

Selecting another language based on real, valid criteria may help you achieve greater success at learning and give you a deeper purpose. Why do you want to learn this language? Is it necessary for work, school or travel purposes? Is it a matter of personal interest? Have you recently discovered that your great-grandparents were Italian, French or German, and you wish to identify with family ancestry? Do you have specific social needs on which to base your decision to learn (i.e. you’re moving to a country where your native language is not widely spoken; you’re in a relationship with someone who speaks a different language, or you wish for yourself—or your children—to take advantage of other languages at schools and in society).

If you have the opportunity to choose a foreign language, to learn or teach your children today, pick one that is relevant to your needs and interests but that will allow you to reach your goals at the same time. Once you’ve judiciously selected a language, immerse yourself in that other language and use your skills as they progress from zero to fluency. Forget shyness: practice does make perfect!

Conscious adults can force themselves to use new
language skills, but it’s never recommendable to oblige a child in the home (apart from academic requirements, of course). Positive reinforcement is a great way to motivate children to use their blossoming communication skills: make learning fun with games and interactive tools; praise improvement while always allowing them to progress at their own rates; encourage rather than reprimand. Would classes in conversation help you or your children learn? Do you have time constraints and need to learn quickly due to work or a personal move? Here are some more tips on getting your kids, or yourself, started:

• As soon as you achieve a basic level of comprehension in a new language, expand to multiple forms of exposure and stimulation: listen to music, watch television or movies (dubbed), read lots of books, newspapers and magazines, attend theatrical performances or community programs and events in the other language; broaden friendship circles, and participate in local clubs or groups that embrace the use of your new language and can help you cultivate and practice skills.
• Observe and listen to others who use your other language at all times and whenever possible; participate in conversations without fear.
• Ask for help through corrections or feedback at the moment when your errors occur, whether spoken or written.
• Exercise your growing language skills regularly, not just at class time or on the days you attend group meetings. Soon you’ll even begin to dream in the other language. Learning a new language is similar to learning to play a musical instrument. How can you expect to advance if you only play the piano (guitar, clarinet or tuba) on the days when you see your teacher or have class time? Exercising your skills is the key to progress.
• Share learning with a friend who identifies with the special challenges involved.
• If you are living in a new country or are surrounded by the culture that speaks your other language as that of major communication, never isolate yourself by interacting solely with compatriots who speak your native tongue: this will limit your progress. The necessity to learn does have its advantages.
• Learn via the culture for more insight into the people and surrounding society: this will enhance your progress.
• Study the language’s grammar, punctuation and syntax.
• Consider helping others learn your native language. Teaching a language to others may improve your own learning strategies.

For families who are not already bilingual in make-up...

Aside from the above points, what else might you need for you or your children to become bilingual?

• Interest, initiative, willingness to actively participate, and the desire to learn are good starting points for you, and/or your children, to become bilingual.
• Secondarily, you’ll need to research your language options, access and gather resource materials (theses don’t need to be expensive or fancy), involve your partner/children in the process, maintain consistency, set goals for yourselves and continue practicing until you reach those goals, and remember to allow for progress at individual speeds and capabilities.
• Use computers and the Internet as powerful tools that can be harnessed to suit your needs and learning styles. Public libraries, where available, can also be immensely helpful places.
• Enlist the help of friends, neighbors, teachers, and associations that represent or use your other language. If they know the language, they might be willing to help you in some way.
• Investigate further about human resources that are available in your community (groups, clubs, networks, activities) and attend as many functions as possible, at least until you achieve your expectations - which can be set as small as
conjugating a verb into all its proper tenses and using that verb correctly, or as large as reading and comprehending your, or your child’s, first novel-length book (or children’s picture book) in the other language.

For families who are bilingual in make-up and wish to stay motivated...

It may seem natural or downright easy at times, but there can be moments when using more than one language at home is tricky. Speaking one language with your life partner, a second language with your children, and perhaps a third with company or the larger society (or extended family members) can get you tongue-tied, or at least tired! How do you tackle that occasional fatigue and keep a positive attitude about the gift of bilingualism? Silence can be wonderful, so when you need to break from the constant mental buzz involved in multiple language use, carry out silent or purely physical activities and catch your breath. Then…

- Use your languages lavishly- as the gift that keeps on giving to your children.
- Involve extended family members to participate in events and outings with you: writing e-mails or letters (if long distance), playing and reading at story time, or retelling tales of folklore are great ways for grandparents to stay actively involved while using their native languages with grandkids. Relate to each other through continuous communication and forge stronger family ties too!
- Consider bilingual education (or immersion) for your children. Check what’s available.
- Expose your children to multiple learning situations by accessing and utilizing all available community resources.
- Participate with your children at events and activities that involve your native and/or other language use (volunteer to read stories to the class, help out in the library or in class, have planned play dates that encourage communication between your kids and their guests).
- Limit television, videogames and solitary computer-game use: spend free time in a variety of ways that exclude passive TV use and include communication or actively relating to others.
- Make agreements with your partner and children about language use at home (i.e. at home you might speak your native language, or the language of minor social communication; yet, when guests are present in your home you will speak their language, which would be the language of major social communication). Also, each parent may wish to speak his or her native language with the children at all times; which can help children identify language use with each parent.
- Use your language(s) in all the many different forms of expression: verbal, written, theatrical, song and music, literature and the many different genres, play and conversation. Celebrate your languages!
- Use and practice your language(s) in a multiplicity of settings and situations: play, work, home, public, with friends, in games and recreational activities, with company and extended family members.
- Amplify and broaden friendships or social circles to include other people who use your native, second or other languages. Don’t be timid!
- Be an example for your children; admit and correct your errors when they occur as a positive learning experience for all.
- When your children surpass you in their second or other language, and they probably will at some point, continue to learn with them and from them.
- Read aloud with, or to, your children in any of your language(s) frequently!
- Surround the whole family with reading materials in all of the languages that are used in your home.
- Enlist the help of friends, neighbors, teachers, and associations that represent or use your other language for continual exposure and opportunity to participate in ongoing activities around your community.

Being or becoming bilingual is within your reach, and staying motivated is possible when you experience the advantages working in your life and in the lives of your children.

You don’t need a bicultural home environment to recognize the rewards of bilingualism in your lives, so why not start today!

The members of the Mac Donald-Moran family use two languages regularly at home- English with mom and Spanish with dad. The four kids (and mom too) have engaged in French as a third language; through academic immersion, core French and personal tutorials. Working towards becoming trilingual is a goal that we can work on as individuals and as a collective group. Send comments to Gerry: gerry@canadianculture.com.

www.canadianculture.com/canadianabroad/
looking back to the past year:

THE POWER OF THE SCREEN

By Lilian Feitosa
As a new year begins, I have decided to look back to the months that passed since I wrote my first column last March so I can feel motivated to look forward to the future. That first column was titled “Enjoy the Ride” (www.biculturalfamily.org/one-familyonelanguagemar06.htm) and introduced our family’s journey towards multilingualism. As this column’s title describes, our family generally uses one language at home, Brazilian Portuguese, because my husband and I are Brazilian and our sons, who were born here in the United States, have double citizenship. This look back has made me reach an interesting conclusion regarding my older son’s English language development – we owe most of it to the screen, be it the TV’s or the computer’s.

In the past year, English slowly started to enter our household more and more, because our older son, who is going to be five next March, has been getting more proficient every day. He still stays home with me full-time, but his brief interactions with English speaking children and, most importantly, TV shows, DVDs, and online games (he plays those from PBS Kids’s website), are introducing him to English. Whenever he says a new word or asks me for the meaning of a word or expression – something he does daily, sometimes more than once – I ask him where he heard that, and he can always tell me exactly in which DVD, show, or website. This not only helps me explain the meaning of the word(s) because of the context, but allows me to know exactly where his new vocabulary is coming from. I just remembered that I already gave at least one example of such words learned in videos in the last column I wrote (Sept-Oct) (www.biculturalfamily.org/sept06/secure/onefamilysept06.html).

So this has been a prominent characteristic of our family’s experience with multilingualism for a while now.

Sometimes it takes me longer to figure out that he learned something from a DVD or TV show. Take for example the day I was playing with him and decided to point out the names of the parts of his face.

“Cheeks,” I said, pointing to his cheeks. “Forehead,” and pointed to his forehead.

“No Mama,” he joked laughingly, “one head, not four head!”

“Wow, how smart my son!” I thought.

Well, a few days later I saw that he learned this joke in one of his funny DVDs. After the discovery, I was not disappointed that he had not made up that joke himself, I was actually amazed that he was able not only to passively learn words from the video, but also to use them in the exact context they should be used.

Since then, because of the daily new words coming from things he has seen on TV or played with in the computer, I have become very curious to find out what language development specialists have to say about the role of videos and computer games in the process of learning new languages. I remember having read in several parenting books that it is the interaction with other people that helps a baby to acquire language and that videos are not helpful at all. Perhaps when one is already fluent in a first language and is learning a second one, in the absence of real interactions (and our sons’ interactions are very minimal), other kinds of media become much more powerful than they would be in other circumstances.

As a conscientious parent, I try to limit my children’s screen time as much as possible because I know that watching television and playing computer games are addictive and not very healthy, sedentary activities. It gladdens me to know that they can have positive results, though. In my older son’s case, they have helped me to become very communicative in English, so much so that a few months ago he said exactly the opposite thing he had said in an interaction I described in my Sept-Oct column: “Please speak English with me, Mama [or Papa]!” And we comply, so he can practice, and we are always amazed by how proficient he is becoming. Lately, he has been actually going back and forth between both languages. Yesterday, for example, we were talking in English for a bit and he said: “Mama, now I’m going to speak in Portuguese with you, OK?”

If the screen is a major learning tool for my older son, he, in turn, is his younger brother’s main language teacher. My younger son, who is two and a half, loves to repeat whatever his older brother is saying, be it in English in Portuguese, sometimes with hilarious results. One day we were having dinner and he started repeating his brother’s “pleases” – in English.

“Please, please, please,” he repeated when asking for something. I thought I’d try to reinforce the Portuguese and said, “Linton, say it in Portuguese now!”

He promptly replied: “Português, português, português.” This was so hilarious we just could not stop laughing for several minutes.

Trying to raise multilingual children is certainly a very fun adventure! I am glad my husband and I have embarked in this ride and that our sons are joining us. I am also thrilled with the opportunity of sharing our experiences with you. Happy New Year and Happy New Language Learning!!

Lilian W. is a monthly contributing editor and columnist for Multilingual Living Magazine. She is a foreign student from Brazil currently working on her Ph.D. dissertation in the humanities. She and her husband speak Portuguese at home with their sons, but she is hoping they will start learning English soon. Check out her family’s journey in her One Family One Language column each month. You can learn more about Lilian at her blog: mamaintranslation.blogspot.com.
Are you satisfied with how much Spanish your children can speak?

Are your children connected to their cultural heritage?

How do you raise bilingual and bicultural kids in a monolingual environment?

There is no such thing as a “typical” Latino family, but one thing is certain. Latinos are proud of their heritage, and consider Spanish to be an important part of their cultural identity -- whether or not they themselves can speak it fluently. But keeping the Spanish language and culture alive is a challenge for many Latino families in the United States.

Even with the Latin “boom” which is shaking the airwaves in every rincón, many children in bilingual homes simply feel more comfortable in English. While they probably speak Spanish with their abuelos, they often resist speaking Spanish to their own parents -- not surprisingly, since most of their day is conducted in English. They go to school in English, watch TV in English, hang out in English.

Many Hispanic parents wish their children spoke more Spanish -- and in fact, wish that they themselves spoke more Spanish to their children.

“Unfortunately, I speak more English than Spanish with my children. I probably speak Spanish only about 20 percent of the time with them, and they with me,” says Zoraida V., a teacher and bilingual psychologist of Puerto Rican descent who lives in New Jersey with her three children, ages 14, 18 and 21. Her sentiment is echoed by Itzel S., born in Panama, and mother of a 10 year old daughter in the Washington, D.C. area: “I wish I could speak more Spanish with my daughter, but she’s very reluctant to speak Spanish with me.”

“My children really only speak Spanish to their grandparents,” recounts María S., a Salvadoran-born artist who lives with her three children and her Mexican/Puerto Rican husband in the San Francisco Bay Area. “I think that tends to be the case in most second generation Latino homes -- the kids understand and speak Spanish, but they identify more with the English language because that is what they are surrounded with on a day-to-day basis.” María’s experience reflects a very
Keeping Spanish language alive is easier said than done for Latino families living in the United States. The second generation is finding that they often lack the same motivation to keep the language alive as their parents. But all is not lost! It takes extra effort but the linguistic and cultural payoffs are tremendous!
Typical bilingual family situation, with primarily Spanish-speaking grandparents, Spanish/English bilingual parents, and primarily English-speaking children. In fact, all of the parents interviewed for this article said that the time when their children are most likely to communicate in Spanish is with their abuelos.

Typically, Spanish-speaking parents will speak Spanish to their children, especially the first-born, while the children are young and in the home full-time. But as the children move into elementary school -- and a more predominantly English-speaking environment -- some begin to resist speaking Spanish. While they usually still understand Spanish perfectly, they will answer in English. “My daughter is totally bilingual in her comprehension,” notes Itzel, “she just doesn’t want to talk.”

Another common scenario is that the bilingual parent may fear that speaking Spanish will confuse their child and slow his or her progress in school, so they stop speaking Spanish to the child. One parent interviewed says she made a conscious decision to stop speaking Spanish with her child after she noticed his confusion in a pre-school Mommy-and-Me music class: “All the animals in the song were saying different sounds than what he had learned!” As with many parents who have made a similar choice, she now is making a concerted effort to bring more Spanish back into her children’s lives: “I’m making an effort to speak more Spanish with them now.”

Of course, there are some times when many Latino parents are almost sure to speak to their children in Spanish: “¿Cuando te molestas, todo sale en español!” assures Ana.

In addition to the Spanish language, Hispanic parents want to share their cultural traditions with their children. Not surprisingly, food, music and dance are key themes here. “We have really large family gatherings with food, music and dancing,” says María. Television can also play an important role -- especially telenovelas! Several parents interviewed noted that their kids loved to watch telenovelas with them. As long as the content isn’t too “raunchy,” as one parent warned, the novelas are a great way to hear real conversational Spanish. Unfortunately, there is not much for the age group between “Dora the Explorer” and the more adult-oriented programming of the novelas, entertainment and news shows.

Y todos están de acuerdo -- reading in Spanish with children is a must. Most parents feel that it doesn’t really matter if the books are bilingual or only in Spanish, or whether they are original literature or translations of English favorites. Just the action of sitting down to read in Spanish with their child is a moment to treasure, and a way to reinforce their culture and their language.

“| read to them in Spanish,” says Zoraida. “We listen to and dance to Spanish music. We talk about all the Spanish dishes at home and we cook together. I talk to them about my experiences in Puerto Rico, our customs and traditions. And we talk about how important it is not to lose the traditions and the culture.”

What about Spanish in school? It can be a wonderful way to reinforce what the children already know from home -- or it can be a frustrating exercise for both the child and the teacher. Both María and Itzel are fortunate to have been able to enroll their children in Spanish immersion programs, where specific classes such as math, science or social studies are taught entirely in Spanish. But others have not been so happy with their children’s experiences in Spanish class: if the class is not challenging enough, or if it focuses only on vocabulary and grammar, with no emphasis on practical use or conversation, the children are likely to “zone out”. Maybe this is where the line from the Cheech and Chong song comes from: “Mexican Americans...go to night school, and they take Spanish and get a B.” (There is a growing movement to change the way all languages are taught in the United States, and a related movement to design specific programs for heritage speakers. All students will ultimately benefit from this.)

What can you do to encourage your children to teach Spanish and to connect more closely with their cultural heritage? There is no question that the best way for children to learn a language is in an immersion environment. If you can send them to spend a few weeks over the summer with their abuelos, tíos y primos in a Spanish-speaking country, do it! At home, speak as much Spanish as you can. Play games in Spanish -- count in Spanish when you’re jumping rope, buy a pirinola and play it with them, teach them a game from your childhood. Watch TV in Spanish, take a dance class together, cook together.

What if they’re resistant to speaking Spanish? Combine it with a love they already have. If they love to play soccer, play it in Spanish -- what kid could resist the opportunity to shout “¡¡¡GOOOOOOOOOOOOOL!!!”? If they love music, support that interest, but with sabor latino. Itzel knows that her daughter, who resists speaking Spanish at home, has a love for music, especially Shakira and Thalia. The 10-year-old who “won’t speak Spanish” knows every song by heart and sings them to the letter. Itzel continues to encourage her daughter’s interest by taking her to concerts (most recently Carlos Vives, but she is waiting for Shakira to come to the DC area) and watching festivals such as Viña del Mar with her daughter on TV. Take advantage of small opportunities every day. And most of all, talk about your experiences and how much you value your language and your culture. Sus hijos se lo van a agradecer.

Ruth Kunstadter makes it easy for Spanish teachers and bilingual families to inspire kids to love Spanish and learn about Latino culture and heritage at the same time. Visit Ruth at www.chispaproductions.com to find more tips on teaching Spanish with Sabor Latino!
**Las Mamás Dicen .......**

“I only speak Spanish with my children about 10 percent of the time. I know I need to work on this.” (María, native of El Salvador and mother of three in the SF Bay Area)

“¡Cuando te molestas, todo sale en español!” (Ana, Peruvian, mother of two in New Jersey)

“Everything they do and face is in English. All of their favorite shows are in English. Their friends speak mostly English, and we speak mostly English in the home, too.” (María, see above)

“I think in the Spanish language, it is very important to incorporate the cultural values and traditions, because without it, you don’t get a true sense and taste of the heritage.” (Zoraida, Puerto Rican, mother of three)

“She loves the music; she loves Shakira and Thalia. That helps a lot because she learns the songs and likes singing them in Spanish.” (Itzel, from Panama, mother of a 10-year-old in the Washington, DC area)

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**Did You Know?**

The US Census Bureau reports that the nation’s Hispanic population is expected to jump to 49.3 million from 38.2 million by 2015. The 39 million Hispanics currently living in the USA make up 12.5% of the total population.

Spanish is the world’s third most spoken language, after Mandarin Chinese and English, and ranks second in terms of native speakers.

At the end of the 19th century, 60 million people spoke Spanish. Today, almost 500 million people worldwide speak Spanish!

29 million US residents above the age of 5 speak Spanish at home. That’s approximately 1 of every 10 US residents, an enormous consumer and business-to-business market.

Hispanic consumers are the fastest-growing market segment in North America. Their population in the USA has grown by 60% in just one decade and their buying power is expected to exceed $926 million by 2007.

The major cities with Hispanic/Latino populations are New York (over 2 million), Los Angeles (over 1 million), Chicago, Houston, and Miami. The southwestern states traditionally have a very large Hispanic/Latino population, as do large urban areas, but smaller and more rural areas are also growing in Hispanic population. For example, the Latino population of Durham, NC has grown 500% in the last five years.

*Above statistics from www.donquijote.org/

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**Hispanic or Latino?**

The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are often used interchangeably. Some feel that the term “Hispanic” is more of a political term created by the government, whereas the term “Latino” originated within the community itself. Also, many prefer “Latino” since it relates more to Latin America, where most U.S. Latinos/Hispanics are from, as opposed to “Hispanic,” which relates more directly to Spain. Here is an excellent resource on the history and politics of these two terms: www.lasculturas.com/aa/aa070501a.htm
ColorinColorado.org, the first major, comprehensive bilingual site for parents and educators of Latino ELL children, is working with Multilingual Living Magazine to provide families around the world with tips on encouraging language learning in your home! Although primarily aimed toward Spanish-speaking children learning English, these tips are useful no matter what language you are encouraging in your home.

Colorín Colorado refers to a popular ending to many Spanish language fairy tales. It is equivalent to “...and they lived happily ever after!” ColoringColorado.org is a free website which brings parents and educators together to help students learn, and it literally puts parents and classroom practitioners on the same page. The easy to use content of the Web site includes tools and tips for parents on helping their children build literacy skills. It also has instructional tools and tips for educators of ELL students. It’s a one-stop shop for parents and educators looking to help these students in achieving academic success.

As an added bonus, ¡Colorín Colorado! establishes a crucial link between home and school. With language barriers out of the way, parents can feel more empowered to be a part of their child’s education. We know that the more involved a parent is with schooling, the more successful their child is likely to be. Parents and educators can use these resources to help children gain the academic skills needed to thrive in school...and beyond. We believe that’s what education is all about – success!

After all, doesn’t every child deserve to live happily ever after?

Look for ColorinColorado’s tips in each Multilingual Living Magazine!
Give your child lots of opportunities to read aloud. Inspire your young reader to practice every day! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

- **Don’t leave home without it.**
  Bring along a book or magazine any time your child has to wait, such as at a doctor’s office. Always try to fit in reading!

- **Once is not enough.**
  Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems. Re-reading helps kids read more quickly and accurately.

- **Dig deeper into the story.**
  Ask your child questions about the story you’ve just read. Say something like, “Why do you think Clifford did that?”

- **Take control of the television.**
  It’s difficult for reading to compete with TV and video games. Encourage reading as a free-time activity.

- **Be patient.**
  When your child is trying to sound out an unfamiliar word, give him or her time to do so. Remind to child to look closely at the first letter or letters of the word.

- **Pick books that are at the right level.**
  Help your child pick books that are not too difficult. The aim is to give your child lots of successful reading experiences.

- **Play word games.**
  Have your child sound out the word as you change it from *mat* to *fat* to *sat*; from *sat* to *sag* to *sap*; and from *sap* to *sip*.

- **I read to you, you read to me.**
  Take turns reading aloud at bedtime. Kids enjoy this special time with their parents.

- **Gently correct your young reader.**
  When your child makes a mistake, gently point out the letters he or she overlooked or read incorrectly. Many beginning readers will guess wildly at a word based on its first letter.

- **Talk, talk, talk!**
  Talk with your child every day about school and things going on around the house. Sprinkle some interesting words into the conversation, and build on words you’ve talked about in the past.

- **Write, write, write!**
  Ask your child to help you write out the grocery list, a thank you note to Grandma, or to keep a journal of special things that happen at home. When writing, encourage your child to use the letter and sound patterns he is learning at school.

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**www.ColorinColorado.org**

*Practical, research-based information on how to help English language learners read ... and succeed!*
Re-balancing language use at home

By Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert
January is the time for new resolutions and a chance to think about how bilingualism is working in your family.

You might be wondering whether you are doing the right thing bringing up your child bilingually. You might have a child who refuses to speak one language or who is just not making much headway with one language. Your child might be fluent in one language but reluctant to even answer you in the other one. You might have had criticisms from grandparents, friends with kids the same age, your doctor or teacher. You might feel like just giving up on bilingualism. Sometimes one parent feels that the child has not learnt their language because they did something wrong. The parent may feel hurt or confused as to why the child has not just ‘picked up’ his or her language, even though they are speaking it.

Language is a fluid entity and many families go through a stage of ‘imbalance’ when one language over-dominates another one. We have been through this with all three of our children, aged nine, six and three years old. They all went through a stage of refusal to speak my husband’s language (French). Our eldest boy didn’t say much in either language, and didn’t have a reason to, until he needed to speak to his French cousins who didn’t speak a word of English. Our daughter reckoned that it wasn’t worth the effort of learning French, when English was spoken by everyone! Nina was finally jump-started into speaking French by going to a French-language school at age four. Our third one, Gabriel, speaks back to my French husband in English, although he understands if asked if he wants a candy in French!

Seven Tips for Improving Language Use for 2007

1. **Try to calculate how much of each language you are speaking at home.** 20% will give a basic knowledge, but between 40-60% is needed for a balanced bilingual or enough for a child to be able to hold a conversation. Perhaps you need to spend more one-to-one time with your child using your language exclusively?

2. **Your child might be wondering why he or she has to speak one language.** Explain to children what speaking your language means to you and how it will help them in the future to communicate with family or people they will meet who speak that language. For older children you can mention that it might help them to have a more interesting job or study in another country too.

3. **You might be struggling to pass on your language single-handedly.** Get extra help. You can find a tutor or language classes, employ a nanny/au-pair using that language or find an activity run in the weaker language. Form a group with other parents and children. If you can, spend more time in the country where the language is spoken.

4. **Look at your book and video/DVD collections.** Do you have material in both languages? Can the children watch films in both languages? Do you have a mix of media – picture dictionaries, stories, informative non-fiction and word games? Think about joining a library, which has books in the weaker language, borrowing from friends or ordering from an international bookseller.

5. **Is the school language dominating the other one?** Perhaps your child has just started school and is ‘swamped’ by the one language and new academic demands. Be understanding, but ask the child to tell you about his or her day and problems in your language and negotiate time for reading/writing in the other non-school language.

6. **Are you using your language enough?** Have you moved to another country and stopped speaking your language? You might be a fluent bilingual and using your second language at home or at work. Try to set aside time for using only your first language, perhaps linked to an activity or a time when you are free to talk. Use photo albums or books as a way to get conversation going and ask lots of questions.

7. **Don’t let your child get away with using the other language with you, if you can see that he or she is becoming progressively monolingual.** Ask questions like ‘Which one do you want? The pink or the green one?’, which demand a concrete answer. Avoid easy or ‘yes/no’ questions where the child can just nod or point. Look the child in the eye and wait for the answer, which might take more time to be phrased or processed.

We must be patient with our little bilinguals. They are learning a lot about life in a short time and language is only part of their learning process. Spend time with them, make your language real and enrich their life with your cultural and linguistic knowledge. Allow them to make mistakes and take risks when using new grammar rules and vocabulary, but keep an ear out for too much dominance in one language. Don’t assume they will just pick up your language because you speak it - remember it takes two to have a conversation.

Suzanne is the mother of three more-or-less bilingual children aged 9, 7 and 3 years. The family now lives in Chicago, America. Suzanne’s book on Bilingualism Language Strategies for Bilingual Families is available through Multilingual Matters: www.multilingual-matters.com
My son’s name is Ivan

What happens when your relatives don’t share your multicultural journey

By Dinka Souzek

“I wish I could explain to my cousin that I became this mix of things so I could stay myself.”
"Congratulations on your baby boy!" my cousin wrote. "We especially love the name. I know it’s not really our business, but we still wanted to say how much we liked it."

The sharing of unsolicited opinions about the name of a new baby coming into the family is standard fare falling under the "dealing with relatives" section of parenting. When you add one or two other cultures to the mix, things get really interesting, as now mere personal preferences can be elevated to national(istic) issues. My American husband and my Austrian (from Croatia emigrated) self had decided to name our son “Ivan” – the Croatian version of John, as a result of a range of many emotions, preferences, opinions and hopes, just like any other parent. My cousin, though, had taken it as a sign, maybe a sign of hope that after all these years I still hadn’t forgotten the country I was born in and both our parents were from. It probably was the first thing I did in a long time that he approved of, or at least he could identify with. Reading that email I could feel his emotions, as if he was remembering a long lost friend. I lingered a little and then moved on, reliving a familiar emotion. A mix of disappointment, sadness and gratitude.

I have never “forgotten” Croatia, nor have I ever felt like I left behind my Croatian identity or abandoned it or anything else. Images that I know many of my relatives conjure up when they think of me. True, I am not Croatian in its most general and simplest definition, but as always things are so much more complicated. It is impossible, though, to convey when your sense of self of it does not fit into any of the boxes provided. The problem of personal identity versus the expectations of others is universal, but when nationalities come into the mix, the term “complicated” takes another level.

My family left Croatia for Austria in 1984 when I was almost 9 years old. It was not flight, but it was not really voluntary either. I think my parents would have preferred to stay. I had no choice in the matter, and even though I was glad to be in a free country it took me quite a bit of work to adjust to the new environment. I never became Austrian. I became a Croatian who moved to Austria, or an Austrian from Croatia. Say it any way you will, I was both. It took me years to realize that and once I did, I found some peace in that ongoing identity battle. I didn’t have to pick. I could be both. Unfortunately people close to me, who did not go through the same experience, beg to differ. No, not beg, they demand. It took me another set of years to realize that their scorn over me not being Croatian enough and becoming Austrian (“Your accent!***Your demeanor!***Your ignorance about Croatian daily news!” “Your… whole… deal!”) was a direct expression of their own values and choices and I had no responsibility for how they felt. Their identity was directly linked to staying where they were born; their sense of loyalty was defined by living in one country, speaking one language. Not doing that would mean destruction. In their eyes, here I was, destroying what they held dear.

I wish I could explain to my cousin that I became this mix of things so I could stay myself. We don’t live alone and we don’t live in the past. We live now, we live with the people around us and our commitment is to the now and to these people. The more we know about the world the more we know about ourselves. I adapted and I learned and my life grew richer. I learned to express myself in a different language and to navigate a different set of cultural codes, so I could survive and so I could make new friends and let new people into my life. I learned to love my new home. When I go back to Croatia I feel my Croatian identity revived and I enjoy that. I also feel a little sad because I miss it. Those are the things I would like to talk about with my relatives, but it is usually impossible. It would only be interpreted as regret, as a final confession… something like “I should have never left” or “I wish I could come back”. I feel there is a waiting expectation for me to finally become what I apparently stubbornly refuse to: An antique Croatian, lost and desperate in the Diaspora, crying for the homeland. That’s when I shake my head, I feel disappointed, sad, because I won’t be that even if it means not being able to connect with my family like I used to.

When I got married, I moved to the US and now, almost 7 years later, I feel I have gone through similar things. Am I American? No, not in the general, most simple definition of it. I am also not “not-American.” I learned to love another home, other people, made more friends. I also probably added a lot more fuel to the fire of some of my family, who thought Austria was far enough. Then I had a son and gave him a Croatian name. My cousin wrote me the first email in years, because he was happy. About the baby of course, but mostly because of the name. How could I explain? I couldn’t. If I really thought I needed to redeem myself, would naming my son really be the way to do it? My son, who most likely will never speak Croatian, let alone live there? Would it be fair to burden him with that heavy of a legacy? Yes, Ivan is a Croatian name and I like it also because it is Croatian, but not just because. I don’t feel the need for redemption.

If I knew I could be understood, I would have emailed my cousin back: “Thank you for emailing me. I miss you all and wish we didn’t live so far apart. I’m glad you like the name. We love it too. I am so grateful to have been born in Croatia and for my Croatian family. They made me who I am today, just like Austria and the USA did. None can be replaced, each is unique and I love them all, so please, don’t make me choose.”

Dinka Souzek is a Croatian-born Austrian, living with her American husband and two children in the U.S.A. She blogs at:www.souzek.com/dinka.
The journey of creating an audio resource for bilingual and multilingual families

By Irma Lachmund

Bilingual is beautiful!

Information from a parent perspective for families with more than one language.

To support the literacy development of our children.
In 2005 I was involved in the Western Australian Ethnic Community Council and made great contacts between the different ethnic communities in Perth. Many were struggling to maintain their family-established language schools, which are available for a fee to children and adults and provide education in the home languages. These schools usually meet for two hours on a Saturday or Sunday morning and are sometimes connected to a church.

Although the Australian government supports ethnic schools with a small subsidy per school-aged child, these schools do not usually address the needs of parents for strategies to foster the language learning of their children at home. We heard accounts of grandparents speaking English when dropping off their grandchildren at the Saturday school and picking them up after two hours and speaking English again. The struggle to maintain the community language is especially strong when there is limited support at a local level and no ethnic community organisations are offering fun events that encourage the maintenance of the cultural traditions and language.

With the aim to assist families in such a situation, Bilingual Families Perth accepted an invitation in May 2005 for a weekly slot at the local ethnic radio station 6EBA World Radio. We were asked to talk about raising children in more than one language and to share our experiences, strategies and tips with other parents. The program was funded by the Western Australian Office of Multicultural Interest, which gives a total of A$300,000 each year in support of community development projects that support cultural diversity. The program was called MOSAIC and was broadcasted on Thursdays after lunch. We continued to have weekly sessions for about 6 months, then changed to monthly sessions until our final broadcast for Harmony Week in March 2006. The radio program was abandoned after an internal review.

We were sad, but nevertheless cheerful. Since all broadcasts were being broadcast live, we gained extensive experience in radio media, which we enjoyed a lot. Many women and men of our network gave it a go and told their stories over the radio. We approached other radio stations and had a run on national radio and a little on mainstream radio. Three interviews were taken by SBS Radio, a national Australian broadcaster, and one of the most diverse radio stations worldwide that broadcasts in 64 community languages, also available over the internet at www.sbs.com.au.

We were ready for the next step and thought about creating an Audio CD that would make our experiences available to a wider audience in hard copy and over the internet. Our hope was for mainstream radio stations to pick up on the issue and to provide a tool to parents, disseminated as a part of education support at schools. The idea soon got a name: Aussie Plus Audio CD ‘Raising Children with more than one language’. The Management Committee of Bilingual Families Perth early on agreed on proposed outcomes for the project (see insert at end of article). Funding negotiations were successful with the Western Australian Department for Education and Training and a Steering Committee of parents and academics was established in early 2006.

Although we were pretty clear about what issues parents wished us to address, we first conducted a parent survey with around 40 parents. Issues such as language mixing and how to motivate the child and yourself were running high on the agenda (see results at end of article).
It took us a year to get the CD together. Information was gathered mainly through parent interviews from two professionals who are working for the Education Department. We also included three broadcasts done by SBS Radio some years ago. It turned out to be an interesting mix of stories, thoughts, strategies and tips. And we shared a very proud moment when we launched the Audio CD on 20 November 2006 at the Loftus Community Centre. Parts of it are available on the internet at www.bilingualfamilies.net. We decided that this was not the end of the project, but merely Version 1. We plan to update the CD as the year progresses, with Version 2 expected in March 2007, hopefully containing the full CD on the internet.

Please have a listen and provide us with feedback to bfp@webace.com.au. Hard copies are available from Bilingual Families Perth, POBox 517, Mt HawthornWA 6915, Australia for the cost of the postage.

Irma Lachmund is the founder and chairperson of Bilingual Families Perth. She is originally from Germany and is the mother of two bilingual children aged 8 and 9. Irma can be reached at: bfp@webace.com.au
To connect bilingual parents and link their issues and stories

To disseminate information and experiences related to raising children with two languages to the community, schools and parents

To share strategies, tricks and tips from parent to parent

To provide parents information on bilingualism

To empower parents to make an informed choice about the maintenance of the family language

To increase awareness about the benefits of bilingualism and the situation of bilingual families

To enable community radio stations to include information on two languages in one family in their regular program

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Ten Practical Suggestions for Parents
to Enhance Pre-Reading Skills in Children

by Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa
1. **Read with your child**, preferably letting her choose the book. Read in an interactive way, ask questions about the text, ask your child to find the pictures related to the passage being read, suggest alternative possibilities to an ending, reflect on the content of the book, let her turn the pages – reading for 30 minutes a day has been shown to boost verbal expression and vocabulary skills in children as young as two! These are both directly related to later reading skills. Ask your child to “read” you the story even if it means retelling from memory. Point out key words if she asks. Read in as many languages as you are proficient in.

2. **Play with Nursery Rhymes and use Rhythmic Games** to encourage phonemic awareness (in as many languages possible). This could also include nursery rhyme tapes in other languages as the rhythm, intonation, and variety of sounds are intriguing to children, especially during the Windows of Opportunity*.

3. **Sing with your child.** Or encourage him to sing alone. It is engaging and encourages memory, and shows benefits much the same as rhythm games and rhymes (in as many languages as your child shows interest).

4. **Ask your child to retell a story** from a book or to make up a story herself and then listen, ask questions, and show your interest in her blooming literary development!

5. **Try reading games** in the car or while at the supermarket. (“Today is ‘M’ day. How many M’s can we see on the labels of the food or on license plates or on street signs?” Make sure you repeat the sound of the letter of choice each time they find it. “Yes, another ‘M’ mmmm, good!” Or a game of “I-spy” is always a winner: “I spy a red train, who sees the train?” If you see signs in other languages, be sure to read them as well, if you are capable. Be sure your pronunciation is good in all languages you play the game in.

6. **If available, Sesame Street-type videos or cassettes** which encourage letter and sound recognition can be used;

7. **Playing with magnetic letters** on the refrigerator or cutting shapes from playdough allows the *physical manipulation of letter shapes*.

8. **Pretending to write** (play restaurant with your child and let him “take your order” on a small note pad, for example, or play “school” or “library” with him to show the many different ways reading and writing are used around him. Teach your child to actually write and recognize his own name as well as that of other family members (mom, dad, etc).

9. **Labeling some (by means not all!) things** in the child’s room (“table,” “chair,” “door”) helps with later sight recognition of words.

10. **Encourage all your child’s attempts and do not compare her progress to others.** Each person has different strengths and aptitudes, and your positive reinforcement is necessary to help her reach her own potential.

**Remember:** Readers come from reading families. Studies have shown that children who see their parents reading are more likely to be readers themselves. Model the behavior you want to encourage.

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Once upon a time, long, long ago, there was a family. They went for a walk through a park and before they knew it, they found themselves standing in the middle of the park in front of a person who was doing magic tricks and juggling colored balls in the air. He had lots and lots of colored balloons tied to his back. Do you know who he was? He was a clown!

When the family got very close to him, the clown said, “Hello, happy family, I’m glad you came walking this way, because I think you might enjoy some of my tricks.” Although the family was a bit apprehensive, they stayed very close together, held each other’s hands, and sat down on the green grass to see the clown’s magic tricks.

First the clown pulled out some balloons and string from his pockets, and gave some to each family member, and said, “Fill these balloons up with air from your mouth, and then tie them with string to the backs of each other’s shirt collars.” So that’s what they did. Before they realized what was happening to them, or how it was being done, they found themselves floating up, up, up and away, high, high above the park, then higher and higher above the clouds, until all they could see was the clearest, deepest, bluest sky they had ever seen.

You might think they would be afraid, but they weren’t, for two reasons: One, because they were still holding each other’s hands, and two, because they could hear the clown’s voice saying, “Don’t be afraid, because the place where you are going to next is very good and kind and beautiful.” So they squeezed each other’s hands as tight as they could, took a
deep breath, and continued floating.

Suddenly, in an instant, right before their eyes, appeared a place they had never seen or even heard of. It was a wonderful forest, with moisture in the air around them, and vines for swinging on. Flowers were everywhere and colorful butterflies and birds flew through the air, and the family could hear animal voices murmuring through the forest, like sweet music.

As the family floated down, down, down, through tree branches, limbs and leaves, past vines, flowers, birds and butterflies, they finally felt their feet on what they thought was solid ground. But what at first they had thought was solid ground beneath their feet began to roll and move, causing them to go thump onto their behinds.

Then they noticed that the moving thing they were sitting on had a head, and big floppy ears and as they crawled up closer to its head, they could see it also had two, long ivory tusks on either side of its long, tube-like, hose-like snout. Then they realized they were sitting on top of a huge, grey-colored animal. The huge grey-colored animal then raised it’s huge head up toward the tops of the trees, opened its mouth, and gave one, long, very loud trumpet-call that echoed through the whole forest. What kind of animal could this be?

After the huge grey animal made the trumpet call, another animal with a very long neck and big, dark-colored, motley-shaped patches all over its body came crashing through the forest’s vines and branches, leaves and flowers, and stopped right in front of the huge, grey-colored animal. What kind of animal could this be? Then in a soft voice, the tall, tall animal said to the huge grey animal with the floppy ears, “Do you know that family is
sitting on your back?"

The huge grey-colored animal, with the long tube-like, hose-like snout said, “I thought I felt something strange crawling on my back, but I didn’t know what it could be, and, since I can’t see what’s on my back, I called out with my trumpet voice, into the deep forest, in hopes that another animal would come and tell me if there was something wrong with my back. So thank-you, long-necked, very tall animal, for coming to tell me. I am delighted to have a family on my back.”

So the huge, grey, floppy-eared animal with the family on his back sauntered along, slowly and leisurely, through the forest beside the long-necked, long-legged animal with the motley-shaped patches, until they came to a clearing at the edge of the forest. There in front of them they all could see a great expanse of blue sky arched over a rolling, broad vista of meadows, grasslands and marshes. In the center of the great expanse, was a clear, placid lake, fed by dozens and dozens of tiny freshwater streams. And floating and resting or walking were hundreds and hundreds of long-necked, long-legged, white birds.

As the huge, grey, floppy-eared animal, with the family on his back, and the long-necked, long-legged animal with motley-shaped patches all over his body came to the lake, one of the white birds walked over to them. The white bird said to the huge, grey, floppy-eared animal, “It is time for me to fly to the place where the family lives. Would you like me to take the family onto my wings and carry them back to their far-away home?”

The huge grey animal said to the white bird, “Yes. I think it’s probably time for the family to return to their own home, and it would be very kind of you to carry them there, on your great white wings.”

So white bird flew up to where the happy family sat, on the back of the huge grey animal and while hovering there, the white bird made a ramp out of one of his wings and the family climbed onto his back. Then with a huge whoosh of air and flapping of white wings, the
white bird flew away as the family waved good-bye to the grey, floppy-eared animal and the long-necked, long-legged animal.

Suddenly, as quick as a wink, without knowing how it happened or exactly when, the family found themselves standing together again, holding each other's hands in the middle of the park.

Without stopping his juggling of the colored balls, the clown then said, “Well, how did you enjoy my magic trick? Did you get to meet the huge, grey, floppy-eared animal and the tall, long-necked, long-legged animal, with the motley-shaped patches all over his body? Did you get to fly up into the blue sky on the long-legged, white bird’s wings?” The family smiled at each other, and then at the clown, and said, “Yes, thank-you! It’s been a wonderful, beautiful, happy adventure, but now we are very happy to be home.” Then, with a last waving of good-byes to the clown, the family went all the way back to their very own home.

**THE END**

**Tips for reading stories aloud to your children:**

**Snuggle together** with your children in a comfortable location: a sofa, couch, cozy chair, in bed. Your children will cherish these special times with you for years to come.

**Read stories with emotion.** Change your voice so that it is appropriate to different parts of the story. This will engage your children and hold their interest.

**Let your children ask as many questions as they want** about the story and take time to answer their questions! Reading a story is more than just saying the words on the page. It is part teaching, part learning, part interacting with one another.

**Ask your children questions about the story as you read.** Try to pique their curiosity to ideas and images above and beyond just the details of the story. But try to find questions that must be answered with more than just a one word response. Ask open-ended questions that require some thought. However, if your children are tired or prefer just to listen, that is fine as well. They may just want to be near you and hearing your voice.

**The only way your children can learn vocabulary** is if they hear the words used by people around them in context and via stories. Expand your children's vocabulary and you will be providing them with the essential foundation for learning to read and write in the future. And why not do this while enjoying snuggles on the sofa along the way!
Where are all those other families with kids who speak your language? Stop wondering and start a language playgroup. Help families like yours meet and get to know each other! Do you assume that a language playgroup is just for the kids? Think again! Parents are finding that they are having as much fun meeting other adults who speak their language and share their cultural memories. So, what are you waiting for? Take the leap!
Starting a language playgroup is easier than you think! Not a social butterfly? Not the craftiest in the bunch? Don’t worry. You can do the organizational legwork and then let others share by getting people involved and setting up activities. The whole fun of a language playgroup is working together to make magic happen.

GETTING STARTED

Start out by figuring out what you hope to achieve from a language playgroup: Are you looking for friends for your child who speak the same minority language? Are you looking for other parents with young children for discussion and support? Perhaps you would like your child to hear stories and learn songs from other parents or a playgroup leader? It is important you understand your goals before setting out. This will provide you with the motivation and courage to take the first step.

GETTING ORGANIZED

Decide where you would like to meet: Many playgroups meet in the homes of participating parents while others meet in free community centers or library rooms. The benefit of meeting in homes is that toys are already available (make sure the host puts away any special or fragile toys!) while meeting in other places usually means you need to bring your own. Meeting in a home also provides that additional “homey” comfort that a meeting room lacks.

Decide on the structure: Do you like playgroups that are more free-flowing and lack specific structure? Or do you like to know which activities will be happening and when? Since you will be the one starting the playgroup, it is important to decide this ahead of time so that you will have an answer when other parents ask. A structured playgroup means that someone must plan the playgroup activities and then either lead these activities or find someone else who will. A non-structured playgroup is often more conducive to meeting other parents and for kids to have a chance to play with one another. However, your children may end up speaking the community language together in the end if there isn’t any formal structure for at least part of the time.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Once you have decided these basics, it is time to let people know what you have organized. Contact your local community centers, libraries, and schools as well as parent magazines and the local newspapers. Find out who is willing to help you get out the word for free and then send them the information. The best way to help people learn about your playgroup is to start an internet group, such as a Yahoo Group (groups.yahoo.com). People can participate in your playgroup’s private forum, upload documents, add information to the calendar and more. It is free and an easy way to let people know where to find you without having to share any personal contact information before you get to know one another.

GETTING TOGETHER

There will be many people who join your group only to come once and then never come again. This is to be expected so don’t take it personally. Many people realize that either they simply have too much going on in their lives to add another playgroup or it just doesn’t work for them. You will most likely receive requests to join from others in the community who do not speak your language. They are probably interested in free language exposure for their children. It is your choice how to deal with this situation but remember that the whole point of your language playgroup is for you and your children to have a chance to speak your language and be exposed to others who share your culture. If you allow others to join who don’t speak your language, you are defeating the whole purpose of your group. One way to deal with this right from the beginning is to let everyone know that members must have at least one parent who speaks the language fluently. And you can even ask that members request to join your group in the target language.

A language playgroup can be one of the most important things you do to keep language alive in your family. You will be establishing friendships for yourself and your children which will help you and them through difficult times along your multilingual journey. Everyone needs to have someone to talk with from time to time about frustrations and difficulties as well as successes and triumphs! Multilingual families are no exception. By having the support of a language playgroup before your children start school, your children will reap the benefits of already having friendships with other multilingual children. These friendships may stay with your children for the rest of their lives. So, take the leap and make some magic happen!
Beginnings, like many other ideas, are often associated with their opposites, and frequently follow, or at least bring to mind, endings. But beginnings come in many varieties; some occur simultaneously with others, one often precipitating another or many, while others occur independently as singular events.

The kinds of beginnings I’m thinking of today are always full of promise, hope and positive expectations for improved conditions. These kinds of beginnings are not necessarily dependent for their onset on an ending of something else: An additional bloom on an already blossoming tree; a newly discovered star or planet among trillions; a great new melody among the many languages of music; the dawn of a new morning; a new book; another new hello to a beloved friend or relative. None of these depend on the obliteration of the previous day, book or hello. In fact their fullness is often rooted in and enhanced by their predecessors.

During the school years of our lives, each new school year is that kind of beginning. Arriving at the end of summer vacation, the fall semester brings new teachers, new classmates, reunions with old friends and former classmates, some of whom may become new friends. The mix of old and new sets the stage for many happy expectations: Familiar structures, objects and routines; desks, books, workbooks, paper, pencils, chalkboards; established procedures and protocols, with a teacher at the head of the class – a teacher, who not only explains, points to meanings and gives specific instructions for how we should proceed to unravel the mystery of previously unknown knowledge, but a teacher who also insures the smooth operation and progress of the whole school year.

Each new visit with my grandchildren is also a new beginning. With weeks and often months between visits, we begin anew our connections to one another with joyful greetings, hugs and happy expectations of the many warm and loving moments we will share in the days to come. Not that every single moment will necessarily be joyful and loving. Always encountering new challenges to my patience, particularly in regard to learning how to process the feelings I have, whenever hearing my daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren speaking a language to each other which is completely unintelligible to me, I begin each visit with renewed resolve of finding new ways to transcend my occasional inner pangs of annoyance, and attempt to discover new and better ways to keep those occasional annoyances from turning into resentments. With this approach, my hope is that each visit will potentially be, for all of us, the best one ever.

Now at the onset of another new year, once again, from humble and harsh beginnings, the sacred babe of this season, bearing new light, is born again, and another New Year of celebrations begins, during which each one of our new birthdays will be remembered. Each of us, born into a particular family – parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins -- a particular era, place and cultural milieu, created for each before each of us was born. And, in addition, each child, including my own three grandchildren, brings into this same place and era its own news from the universe, its own brand new set of eyes, ears, mental process and way of seeing and knowing the created world. So, with such an abundance of newness all around me, I look forward, with great hope and happy expectations, to celebrating as many as possible of the coming year’s special days with as many of my friends and family members as possible. And I hope too that each and every one of us alive on this earth today, rich and poor, newborn and ancient, may experience, with as much grace and gratitude as we may be blessed with, all the truth, beauty and fullness inherent in each moment entrusted to us.

Begin shortly after Thanksgiving, 2006; completed 31 December 2006.

Sharon K. Cook-Gordon-Spellman has been a year-round resident of the western slopes of the Sierra foothills, near Nevada City, California, since 1972. Her monthly column for Multilingual Living Magazine is about the joys, trials and tribulations involved with being a grandmother of three bilingual children.
Sharon (far left) with family during Christmas 2006 singing “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.”
Do you speak Esperanto?

Esperanto is the most widely used international auxiliary language. It is a planned language whose grammatical rules and vocabulary were developed over several years by a Polish eye-doctor in the 1870’s and 1880’s. Ludovic Lazarus Zamenhof (1859-1917) firmly believed that many of the world’s problems were rooted in the fact that the different people could not communicate with each other due to language barriers. He himself grew up in a multilingual environment: Three main languages were spoken in his home town Białystok, Poland: Polish, Russian and Yiddish. According to his biographers, Zamenhof himself was able to speak these languages and additionally was fluent in German. He also studied French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew and English.

Zamenhof was dismayed by the friction between the ethnic groups, and thought to have found the root of this problem in the lack of a common language. He set out, already during his school years, to design a language; one that is neutral and does not favor native speakers over individuals that learn it later in their life. Zamenhof did not intend his language to replace any national languages; it should rather be learned as a common second language. The political, ideological and cultural neutrality of Esperanto should give all speakers an equal opportunity. After all, a native speaker will in many cases have a linguistic advantage over people who started to learn a language later on in life. After 10 years of development and intensive testing (he translated many works of world Literature into his new language) he published the 16 grammatical rules and 800 vocabulary roots in 1887. His Unua Libro was published using his pseudonym “Dr. Esperanto”, literally meaning “the one who hopes”.

Throughout history, Esperanto has its ups and downs. Before the two World Wars, Esperanto gained quickly in popularity, with the first Esperanto congress in 1905 in Boulogne-sur-Mer, France. At this first Esperanto „World Congress”, nearly 700 people participated. This was probably the first time that many people actively used the language in conversation on a large scale. This congress may therefore have served as a “proof-of-concept” that Esperanto is not only suitable for written,
Some groups have promoted Esperanto to be used as a language for the European Parliament. The EU annually spends enormous sums for translating documents from one language into another. It was suggested to use Esperanto as an intermediary language, into and out of which documents could be translated. Esperanto’s free word order would allow for a direct translation of the documents of a variety of languages. Others, however, are concerned that this would make Esperanto a “European” language, also on formal grounds, and that this would compromise the neutrality of the language.

While it is impossible to give a complete overview over the grammar in a few lines, a few notable criteria should nevertheless be addressed. Esperanto is not related to any ethnic language, but incorporates aspects of many ethnic languages. The vocabulary is based on western Indo-European languages (mostly Romanesque), the pronunciation has Slavic elements. The pronunciation is highly regular. Each character has a clearly defined pronunciation that does not change. One of the characteristics of Esperanto is its highly regularized and exception-free grammar, and its productive word-creation system. With a fairly small number of word roots, and a collection of prefixes and suffixes, it is possible to create a wide range of vocabulary. This aspect should minimize the memorization of a large quantity of vocabulary.

Here is an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>La</th>
<th>lernantoj</th>
<th>lernas</th>
<th>en</th>
<th>la</th>
<th>lernejo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>learn</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>the</td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I like to compare Esperanto to the Asian board game Go and Chess. The rules are simple for both of these games, but the number of combinations that are possible are nearly unlimited. There is a common misconception among critics, who assume that simple rules automatically mean that the language is “primitive” and that it is not possible to communicate complex ideas. On the contrary, the regularized grammar allows for a more unambiguous expression of complex ideas.
Advantages of Learning Esperanto

What are some advantages or benefits of learning Esperanto? Well, what are the advantages or benefits of learning any language? I think that the reasons can be mostly found on a personal level and I assume that the motivation to learn something new are probably as manifold as there are learners. For me, personally, one motivating factor was, besides the elegance and beauty of the language, that I wanted to learn a language, one that I could use and apply after a minimum of study effort. In addition,

* Studies have been conducted that indicate that the learning Esperanto facilitates the learning of other foreign languages (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaedeutic_value_of_Esperanto) in many European countries Latin is taught in middle and high-schools for the same reason. Esperanto’s exception-free grammar and the logical structure of the language gives the students a basis for the structured acquisition of other languages. For these reasons Esperanto is already taught in several schools as an elective course.
* Esperanto is a language that is motivating to learn and gives the learners a feeling of success. It’s regularized grammar allows the person to soon apply the language. It is therefore fun to learn and use.
* A wide range of original and translated literature and poetry is available, also freely over the internet and via publishers.
* Esperantists are internationally networked, allowing cross-cultural contacts through international conventions and a hosting service.

Criticisms of Esperanto

Certainly one of the most voiced criticisms of Esperanto is that it has not lived up to its promises of becoming the world’s lingua franca and that it is is, compared to other ethno-languages, not spoken by the majority of the world’s population. With its several hundred thousand up to maybe 1-2 million speakers world-wide, it is comparable to a minority language, with the difference that the speakers are distributed all over the world. People should rather learn, so it is said, a „real“ language; one that gives people access to a larger number of speakers. What those critics do not realize is that esperanto is a “real” language, one that has been in active use and one that has evolved for 120 years. For many Esperantists the absolute number of speakers is not a primary issue of importance. What is the point of learning and knowing a language with several hundred millions of speakers if the person is not willing to actually use and employ the language by seeking contact with other speakers? Many Esperantists validly claim that they have used Esperanto more often than a national language that they have learned during their school years.

In my view, the fact that Esperanto is not as widely spoken as other national languages is probably one factor why many members of the Esperanto community seek active contact with other speakers, and thus create a context where they can use the language. It is more an issue of attitude than the number of speakers. Especially the Internet has greatly promoted the spread of this language. The community is highly active, and online-courses, forums, chats and mailing lists facilitate the learning and spread of the language and promote intercultural understanding.

Another common criticism of Esperanto is that it “does not have any culture”, as its vocabulary base and grammatical rules were designed and are thus not linked to any particular country. As a matter of fact, many Esperantists view this independence from a particular ethnical, political and national background as an asset and not as a disadvantage. A person attempting to translate the English sentence „This test was a piece of cake“ into another language will certainly not communicate the intended meaning. As an “international language” it should not be a promoter or a carrier of a particular national culture. Rather, it should facilitate the communication between people of different cultures. The comparatively lack of idiomatic expressions in Esperanto is seen as an advantage.

On the other hand, it is interesting to see that Esperanto did, indeed, experience a cultural development in its own way since its creation. Not only was the number of word roots greatly increased and rules of good style and language use developed. The evolution of its culture was not limited to such linguistic aspects. Over the years, Esperanto literature, poetry and music flourished, and radio broadcasts gave the community a strong identity. And of course, there is also the Esperanto Hymn, by L. L. Zamenhof, which should give the reader an impression of the language (see box on next page, translation is from Wikipedia).

If you want to know more about Esperanto, I would like to refer you to the following web sites:

www.esperanto.net (Comprehensive link collection and information)
esperanto-usa.org (Esperanto League of North America)
www.lernu.net (online learning course)
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esperanto (Wikipedia entry)

Oliver Kim is an Esperantist and Teacher at an International School in Austria.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>La Espero: Himna Esperantista</th>
<th>The Hope: Esperanto Hymn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>En la mondon venis nova sento, tra la mondo iras forta voko; per flugiloj de facila vento nun de loko flugu ĝi al loko. Ne al glavo sangon soifanta ĝi la homan tiras familion. Al la mond’ eterne militanta ĝi promesas Sanktan harmonion.</td>
<td>Into the world came a new feeling, through the world goes a powerful call; by means of wings of a gentle wind now let it fly from place to place. Not to the sword thirsting for blood does it draw the human family: to the world eternally fighting it promises sacred harmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub la sankta signo de l’Espero, kolektiĝas pacaj batalantoj, kaj rapide kreskas la afero per laboro de la Esperantoj. Forte staras muroj de miljaroj inter la popoloj divititaj, sed dissaltos la obstinaj baroj per la Sankta Amo disbatitaj.</td>
<td>Under the sacred sign of hope the peaceful fighters gather, and this affair quickly grows by the labourers of those who hope. The walls of millennia stand firm between the divided peoples; but the stubborn barriers will jump apart, knocked apart by the sacred love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sur neŭtrala lingva fundamento, kompreneble unu la alian la popoloj faros en konsento unu grandan rondon familian. Nia diligenta kolegaro en laboro paca ne iliĉigos, ĝis la bela sonĝo de l’Homaro por eterna ben’ efektiviĝos.</td>
<td>On a neutral language basis, understanding one another, the people will make in agreement one great family circle. Our diligent set of colleagues in peaceful labor will never tire, until the beautiful dream of humanity for eternal blessing is realized.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A Quick Overview of Esperanto Grammar:**

- **Esperanto has a liberal word order:** these are all correct ways of saying „I love you”: Mi (I) amas (love, present tense) vin (you). Vin mi amas. Amas mi vin. Amas vin mi. Mi vin amas. Vin amas mi.

- **Regularized pronunciation:** One letter always is spoken the same way, the pronunciation is not influenced by other letters of the word or by the meaning of the word. Here is a counter-example from English: „He lead the group” / „Can you lead the group?” Even capitalization determines pronunciation in English: „I apply for a job” / „I read the book of Job” (a biblical figure, pronounced joub, and how do you pronounce the word „read”? Is it in present or in past tense?) This is not the case in Esperanto, where words are always pronounced the same.

- **Many word roots are internationally known:** Zamenhof has deliberately selected widely used word-roots: universitato (university), komputilo (computer), libro (book), kato (cat)

- **Productive word-formation system:** New words can be created with the use of affixes. This minimizes the memorization of vocabulary:
  - **Lern**-ant-o: the learner, or one who is learning. -ant- is the present participle. The ending -o indicates that the word is a noun. To make it plural we add -j: lernantoj = the learners.
  - **Lern**-as: (he/she) learns. -as is the present tense verb ending.
  - **Lern**-ej-o: the school. -ej- indicates a location or place. The -o indicates that the word is a noun.

- **The grammar is kept to a minimum:** There are 16 grammatical rules. All nouns end in -o, adjectives in -a, adverbs in -e, the infinitive in -i. Present tense is formed by ending -as, past tense -is, future -os. To sing: kanti, sang (past): kantis, will sing: kantos, sings (present): kantas.

- **In Esperanto, idioms are kept to a minimum:** In a national language an expression may be grammatically correct, but still wrong, because „you just don’t say it this way”.

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Multilingual Living Magazine - Jan/Feb 2007
“You’re from Austria? And you husband is American? So... how did you guys meet?”

Even though I am asked this question about three times a month I still don’t have a short answer.

“On the internet” I would say. Then I get a look and “Really?... Neat.” Awkward pause. “It’s not the way you think” I would reply immediately, imagining that the person is picturing me in some sleazy chat room.

In fact, the way I met my husband is much more innocent and random than that. It was fall 1998 and I was beyond excited. I had finally gotten an internet connection at home, after having been checking my email at the university for about two years. I couldn’t wait to feed my serious addiction to email and instant messaging. Not only that though, I wanted to download music - as some friends had informed me it was possible. For free! Whatever I wanted! Obviously this was ages ago when nobody was getting sued for that sort of thing. So I got my connection and threw myself into www.audiogalaxy.com offering access to millions of computers that would let me download music. My knowledge was very limited. I knew I needed an ftp-program to connect and it worked... about 50% of the time. Getting the song you wanted could take a long time and so when one day I came across some rare stuff on a computer I had connected to, I took the owner up on the offer to contact him if I needed help downloading. I had no clue who it was, I didn’t really care, but I couldn’t lose by sending him a www.icq.com/download message and increasing my song-per-hour-ratio.

I sent a message and checked his profile. What an unusual name... Lincoln Souzek. Valparaiso, Indiana? I thought Valparaiso was in Chile. Oh well, it’s the US, nothing’s really weird there. To my surprise he did actually answer and was more than helpful with the downloading. As it turns out I was the only international customer. You probably wonder what music I was downloading. To my own disappointment I have no idea anymore. I think it was some kind of swing. It was the whole big-band-comeback then.

I don’t remember much about the first conversations we had. Lincoln asked me about Austria, his obnoxious roommate wanted to know if I liked British bands - because he liked them and I was in Europe after all - obviously that made me a fan of every British band. Somehow we kept in touch. I’d log on in the morning, check my emails and open ICQ. There it was “Gomez” and later “DJ BLAZE” and somehow little by little we were in on each other’s daily lives. Me, 23, in Austria, about to graduate from college, he, 19, in Indiana, just starting his freshman year. I must admit I didn’t think much of it. I enjoyed the conversations but I didn’t think he was a “real” person in my mind somehow. It was all too removed... he was just a name on my ICQ screen, and we had a funny chat now and then. Looking back, I realize we had gotten to know each other, and the ease with which we conversed, which I thought nothing of then, was actually showing a
connection you don’t usually have with strangers you’ve never seen.
Sometime in January Lincoln informed me that he had gotten a generous gift from his aunt for his birthday. It was to be spent on a trip during his first spring break. He was thinking of Australia but that turned out to be too expensive. He looked for friends to go with but that turned out impossible. Thinking he might go on an American-style “Visit 20 European cities in 10 days” trip, I mentioned he could come see me in Vienna. It could be an afternoon with me playing tour guide. I suppose I hadn’t really thought it through, because when Lincoln asked me what I thought of him visiting me, I was caught off guard. I didn’t want to be rude, he seemed quite normal to me, but spending a week or more with a 19-year-old boy I don’t really know is not something I do on a regular basis. Well, it’s not something I DID on a regular basis! Things changed, because after going back and forth about this I decided I was ok with him coming but we would be going skiing with a group of my friends. That way I was not put into a potentially very awkward situation of being alone with him, plus I had less responsibility for his entertainment and well-being during his trip. Before I had made up my mind completely I suggested calling him because we had never talked on the phone and I wanted to somehow check if he wasn’t a dirty old man after all. So I called at about 11 a.m. - which was 4 a.m. in Indiana and we talked. Luckily he did not sound like a dirty old man. The background noise matched very much the sounds of a dorm and his personality sounded pretty much like the “Gomez” I knew from ICQ. So, the plan was made. He would come to Austria in March, spend a week skiing and then maybe venture off to Prague or some other city close by afterwards. Ha. Then my girlfriend said: “ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?! You don’t know him, you don’t know anything about him!” My parents had a milder reaction but still I could see the doubt in everyone’s eyes. It was strange, because I could definitely see the reasoning behind the worries, and rationally, I actually agreed.

Nevertheless, I was still very calm about this situation. I started to rethink this, wondering if I was too naive. Ok, I WAS too naive, but I had always been, so that was not really an argument. I tried recalling a time in our conversations when I felt uncomfortable, maybe hit on or something of that sort. That had never happened, which was rare. I had limited online experience, but even with a few anonymous conversations, guys will usually make some sort of romantic (read: sexual) remark. Well, I could not recall that ever happening. Big plus. Then, he had sent me these cute gifts... a university t-shirt and then a huge teddy bear for Valentine’s Day (I had never really celebrated it, so it was quite thoughtful), then some funny remixes of my voice in a popular song... And again, although that might’ve seemed strange, it had never made me uncomfortable. The gifts were completely sweet and normal within the context of our friendship. We had discussed relationships and Spike Lee and even religion to an extent. I caught myself looking forward to meeting him.

I decided I knew enough that I wasn’t worried about his visit, but I would still let him know some ground rules, so there were no surprises. I called him up a second time and told him I was very glad to take him skiing and show him around etc. but I was not going to promise it until I saw him and we had a coffee or something. That would give me time to say no if I wanted to back out. I was pretty blunt. I said if I didn’t think I wanted to do it, I was going home. It was not very friendly I suppose, and I apologized but there was just no opportunity to slowly get to know each other and then let things take their natural course without having to spell out “I do not want to see you.”

I was surprised to see how calm he answered that he was fine with that and that he understood etc. I asked him whether he was nervous at all. After all he was taking his first trip to Europe, to a country he had never been to, he didn’t speak German. I could’ve as well not shown up at the airport... what then? He said he understood the risks but he thought we’d be fine. That ended up being enough for me. I knew he would only say that if he was an evildoer planning something bad or if he was just normal and thought the same as I did: that we knew enough about each other that we could have a good time.

And so... Lincoln arrived on 2nd March 1999. I was actually extremely nervous. I can admit it now. A few days before he was supposed to come I caught myself thinking: “Too bad he is only 19.” I wasn’t really giving this any further thought. It was just a feeling that he
seemed like a really nice guy and I hadn't noticed anything reproachable yet and meeting him was probably going to change that. Plus even if there was no disappointment, he was 19! That did not sound like a boyfriend age for me. I drove to the airport beyond nervous. Now I know why. Then I thought I was just nuts.

Lincoln got off the plane and looked just like on the pictures he had sent me. Only with a beard. He arrived around 11 a.m. so I dragged him to the mechanic with me, to get my car ready for the ski trip (the car did not end up ready which provided adventure material but I'll leave that for another time). We were caught up on each other’s daily lives and somehow the conversation just continued, only face-to-face and not over little beeping windows. I remember complaining about a situation and kept going over the same thing again and again – as is unfortunately common for me, and he answered summing up my thoughts in one sentence. I remember the exact place. It was completely confusing and clear at the same time. I've never felt so understood, but not on a spectacular level. It just felt... natural. I remember I've never felt so understood, but not on a spectacular revolutionary level. It just felt... natural. I remember more from that day... a grey hoodie, a chocolate cake we struggled over, picking out a movie and then watching it half awake (www.foxmovies.com/thinredline – this is proof we were not romantically involved... yet.). He made a joke about “our kids.” I got chills. I ascribed it to my high strung nerves after a day of extreme excitement. I would’ve believed it too, had I not found myself kissing the 19-year-old perfect boyfriend material about 2 hours later. (No, not in the movie theater! Who do you think I am? It was a street corner, of course!)

I don’t really know how that happened. I am still in shock I did that. It was pretty out of character. Ok, I had “known” him for about four months but this was the first day we actually met. I was completely overwhelmed and to my own surprise I was not having the sense of impending doom that is so often found with every exhilaration. I’m still not sure what happened exactly during those ten days. I remember being scared but I also remember knowing that NOT pursuing this relationship was just not an option. I know everyone thought I was crazy. They were scared and I think they were right to be. I asked myself over and over: Aren’t you scared? And I wasn’t.

We went skiing with exactly one more friend who I felt extremely sorry for, because who wants to hang out with a couple who, on top of that “just” got together? We had a great time, but we could’ve spent the week on a park bench we would’ve been just as happy. It was all you’d imagine it to be, but to me it was not just the being-in-love-high, I was too calm for it. I still had all my rational thoughts together and... did I say I was not scared? I'm pretty sure that at the time Lincoln was leaving to go home we were both thinking of marriage. We weren’t talking about it yet, we saved that for the next time we saw each other 5 months later when I flew to the States. We made plans for the whole immigration issue and after realizing that we really did want to get married as soon as possible we went straight for the marriage-based visa. Lincoln came to visit 4 months after that in January 2000. We got engaged and got married the following 18th May – 14 months after we met (face to face).

Most of my relatives thought the story was grand - and some thought I was just crazy. “You are marrying a cowboy!”– that was supposed to be derogatory, as in “an uneducated American” or something like that. Little did they know my husband would’ve loved to be a cowboy, but instead he is just a philosophy-loving computer geek. I’m not sure if I alienated somebody - it’s sad if I did because our marriage is quite normal and the European/American-factor is almost irrelevant. We had very few adjustment problems when I moved here. We didn’t have the terrible first year either. We just fit.

I don’t know what I would do if my daughter came to me and said she was marrying this guy she has barely met, who is still in college and lives across the ocean. I remember my parents being quite “stunned” but I have to commend them for their reaction. They did not go crazy on me, rather they seemed uneasy but ready to believe that I was mature enough to know what I was doing. Maybe they also felt that I was more calm about this than I ever was about any other relationship I had had. Looking at it from the outside, our story is quite crazy. I don’t know if I could safely recommend it – but I also can’t say it was just pure luck. It taught me that in life two and two do not always add up to four. Sometimes the impossible choice is just the right one.

Dinka Souzek is a Croatian-born Austrian, living with her American husband and two children in the U.S.A. She blogs at: www.souzek.com/dinka.
Did You Know?
“Reading aloud to young children is so critical that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that doctors prescribe reading activities along with other advice given to parents at regular check ups.”

Basic findings: What children need to acquire in order to learn to read.
◆ The ability to distinguish pictures from print.
◆ An awareness that once something is written it says the same thing no matter who reads it.
◆ An awareness of the left to right and the top to bottom progression of text.
◆ The knowledge that there are spaces between words.
◆ A familiarity with the configuration or basic structure of words.
◆ An awareness of the function of letters in the formation of words.
◆ The ability to pretend read, to tell the story from the pictures or from memory.
◆ Phonetic awareness, the understanding of the relationship between letters or groups of letters and the sounds they represent.
◆ The recognition of individual words. recognize spoken words as a sequence of sounds.

Tips for parents to encourage your child to learn to read:
1. Select age appropriate books from the public library or bookstore and read them with your children from birth for at least 30 minutes a day.
2. Talk about or discuss the book, pictures and ideas before reading the book.
3. Point out or ask questions about what the child sees before reading the page.
4. Pause so that the child can fill in a predictable word or phrase.
5. Make comments or carry on a conversation which relates the story to the child’s real personal experiences. Include books in the toy box so children can choose to look at them anytime.
6. Extend stories and written language into activities that relate to the child’s everyday life and have meaning.
7. Provide models in daily life to validate and give meaning to the printed word.
8. Fill your house with newspapers, books, magazines, signs, recipe cards, grocery lists, food labels, and calendars.
9. Provide many opportunities for children to interact with print like the items above and to handle manipulatives such as alphabet letters, word games, and toys.
10. Make frequent trips to your local public library to borrow print materials for your child, to borrow parenting books and videos and to attend family programs with your babies and preschool children.

Whether you are raising a bilingual, multilingual or monolinguual child, it is important that your child receive the kind of stimulation that will encourage language development.

Start Today!
Find ways to incorporate these tips, suggestions and ideas into your child’s life!

Books:


Web Sites:

turtles in ties
Bees Buzz & Lions Roar/Las abejas zumban y los leones rugen“ is a wonderful product that engages young children (2 to 5 years old) with animated shorts and animated text stories about animals while helping them develop pre-reading skills and exposing them to Spanish if they are in an English speaking household or English if they are in a Spanish speaking household. The animated poems, animated text stories and animated alphabet run for 30 minutes in each language. We think your readers will be interested in this product. Many parents appreciate that exposure to a second language benefits cognitive development and Spanish is the language of choice for most families.
Website: www.turtlesinties.com

bilingual families perth
This sister organization to the Bilingual/Bicultural Family Network has come out with a fabulous CD to help families raising bilingual children! Their Aussie Plus CD is available via their website. The CD is focusing on a parents’ perspective and the experiences with very young, preschool and primary school children. The hard copy audio CD also includes three interviews conducted in 2004 by SBS Radio. These will be made available online soon. The participants speak Mandarin, Spanish, Italian, Farsi, Maltese, Gujarati, French and German. Enjoy!
Website: www.bilingualfamilies.net/aussieplus.html

anacleta’s spanish and world language and culture resources
Señora S’s site is a comprehensive source of materials, activities, and ideas about the Spanish language and its many cultures, as well as other world language and cultures, especially for children under ten and their parents and FLES, dual language, immersion, and bilingual teachers. She has also gathered many sites useful for teachers in the fields of FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School), world language, dual language, immersion and bilingual instruction. And teachers shouldn’t miss a separate special section titled “teacher pointers” which are tips gleaned from her personal classroom experience.
Website: www.anacleta.com

help me read
There is an essential need for bilingual and multilingual families to read to their children as much as possible. Reading and talking are essential for passing on vocabulary and for providing a basis for discussing topics which otherwise may not come up in conversation. Help Me Read is a website devoted to helping children improve their reading and writing skills. This is a resource for families, tutors, teachers and community members who want to be involved in family literacy. Help Me Read is sponsored by the Family Literacy Coalition of Puget Sound. Check out their “For Parents” link for support, information, research and advice!
Website: helpmeread.org

bilingualbabies.org
What could be better than a forum for parents raising bilingual and multilingual children in YOUR language - Greek, French, German, Dutch...? Bilingualbabies.org offers not only these fabulous forums, it also includes articles, columns, support and much, much more! The categories are easy to locate and include valuable topics such as “A Parent’s Guide”, “Language Development”, “Culture Issues” and even recipes and traveling with children. Head on over - we are sure there is something there that will pique your interest!
Website: bilingualbabies.org
Ages 0-2: Chatterbox

When we say “chatterbox” we mean you, not your child! Your child will soon be a chatterbox without any prompting from you but if you want your child to be chatting in your language, then now is the time for you to do your share of talking. It is hearing you speak words from your language that will help establish the sounds, intonations, melodies and vocabulary that your child will need to speak and understand your language.

Start by simply talking all the time when you are doing things with your child - changing diapers, eating lunch, driving in the car, taking a walk. There are always things you can show your child and vocabulary you can use. During a walk, talk about the different colors and types of flowers and houses and plants. While cooking in the kitchen, show your child the different ingredients and talk about textures, colors and amounts. It is difficult for some of us to turn into chatterboxes but once you get the hang of it, it will come as second nature and your child will reap the benefits for a lifetime.

Ages 3-5: Biliteracy

Once your child enters the preschool and kindergarten ages, it is time for you to start thinking ahead toward reading and writing. You need to prepare yourself with an arsenal of books, workbooks, information and pens to get your child learning the letters and then words in your language.

Start by building up a good sized library of books that interest your child. Read to your child each and every day. Follow the tips in this month’s magazine for how to get your child interested and focused when you read to them out loud.

It is important that you not push your child too hard in this direction. Start by introducing different concepts. For example, start with your language’s letters or characters and when you child loses interest or if your child refuses to listen to you, leave it and come back to the subject again in the future when he or she is ready. Leave the books and materials around now and then so that your child will see the items. It is possible that your child will eventually ask you to go through the books, at which point the first step will well be on its way. Make it fun, fun, fun!
Ages 6-10: Activities

Dominoes, baseball, soccer, cooking, singing... all of these activities can help you keep your child interested in your language. At this age, there might also be a lot of bonding taking place between fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, siblings, etc. Be prepared for your son to want to only spend time with his father and to only speak his father's language. This is normal yet will demand that you have a tremendous amount of patience. Try not to worry and have faith that this stage will also pass.

You and your spouse should come up with a list of activities that each of you enjoy doing with your children as well as lists of your children's favorite activities. Then add a few new activities to the list that you think each child might enjoy trying. Make sure this list is handy for when you are at a loss of what to do with your child. You should also categorize the activities based on location: those that are best done in the house, those for outside and those for in the car or on a walk.

Observe your child and see how he reacts to the different activities. Make changes and adjust based on his responses. If you notice that your child is particularly interested in a specific topic, for example, dinosaurs, then go with the flow! Most of us live where there is access to a local library so make sure to utilize their resources. In fact, a trip to the library can be an adventure in itself. No books in your library in your language? That is ok. Use the books from the library in the community language to supplement what you have in your language. Either read the books in the community language together with your child and then discuss the contents in your language or just use the pictures for discussion. At this stage, your child is most certainly aware of his bilingualism and your family's language makeup, so relax. If you do not have a library close by and if you cannot afford to purchase many books in your language, remember that you have the internet handy. Search out activities, printouts and tips, then modify them to work in your language.

Ages 11-18: Responsibility

Your child is old enough at this stage to start taking on some language responsibilities. She will most likely have made decisions on who her friends are, subjects in school that interest her most, and how she feels about her bilingualism. During this stage, take the time to work out some language choices and decisions with your child. This doesn't mean you don't stay motivated and continue speaking your language and providing your child encouragement. It means allowing your child more of a sense of “language responsibility” for herself and her surroundings. Let her know what your limits are (for example, she can't expect you to stop speaking your language with her) and you should ask her what her limits are and to decide together if they are acceptable. You are still the parent and have the final say but there are ways to allow your child to have more involvement.

If your child has requests of you (for example, not to speak your language when friends are around) then sit together and come up with a compromise that will work for both of you. Give her the responsibility to come up with different ideas and plans to which you can provide your perspective. Let her know how important your language is to you and provide an example from her life about something that is important (remind her about those shoes she just couldn't live without or her need to have her own space at home to read her books). Help her to make language decisions and to take on responsibilities by providing her guidance in how this is done. Most likely, she will be proud of her bilingualism so help her find ways to further it which fit best with who she is. As she grows and matures, continue giving her books and DVDs in your language which are appropriate for her age and her language level. Children in this stage are often eager to bond with their parents via media which they can discuss and use as a starting point for conversations.
I would love to get some “expert advice” on teaching my son Pedro to read English. In his Spanish preschool (he’s 4) they are beginning to learn the vowels, recognizing the written letter and also the sound. The first one up is “u” so we’ve been pointing out words with the “u”-sound and letter “u” when we see them. That’s easy in Spanish, because every time you see a “u”, you know it’s going to have the same sound. But of course in English it doesn’t. First of all, if he sees the word “bus” I have to explain that the “u” in English has a different sound, so we don’t say “boooo.” Then, the words that do have the “u”-sound are spelled all sorts of different ways: shoe, two, blue, knew, you... not to mention through!

I do have a book with some pre-literacy activities (mostly phonemic awareness) for monolinguals in English, but I don’t know how to go about it without hopelessly confusing him, since he’s only just learning it in Spanish, and the letters don’t always have the same sounds. At the same time I want to encourage his interest in how sounds and letters match up to make words, and I want to take advantage of the malleability of his young mind. So I would hate to put it all off until he has learned to read in Spanish.

So I thought maybe other people might also be wondering how and when to introduce reading in the minority language. Maybe there is someone who would be willing to address this?

-Kate in Spain
I think you need to start by asking yourself why you want to do this, and what is it that irks you about having Pedro learn to read in one language before another. Is it because English is your language? Is it because you feel that Pedro will think less of English if he can’t read in it? My hunch is that Pedro is not a bit worried about (not) learning to spell in English.

I don’t think he will need encouragement. He will make it clear himself whether he is interested in sounds and letters. It is likely that he will become curious about spelling in other languages, since he is being introduced to spelling in one. He will naturally assume that all languages can be spelt in some way, but I doubt it that he will also assume that all languages are spelt in the same way. If he knows that Spanish and English ‘say’ things in different ways, there’s no reason why he should think they ‘write’ things in the same way.

So the ‘problem’ that you see in the lack of unique correspondence between letter and sound in English is your problem as a literate adult in English, not his as a novice speller.

If he asks you about spellings in English, just answer naturally: ‘bus’ is spelt b-u-s in English, the letters b-u-s in English spell ‘bus’. No frills, no worries, no explanations. This is what I did with my children when they started spelling in school -- two different languages for each child, none of them my shared language with the children -- and they mostly satisfied themselves with factual answers of this kind. If Pedro wants to know more when he learns other letters, like my children sometimes did, you can ask him things like what would b-u-s spell in Spanish? how about s-u-b in Spanish? and how about s-u-b in English? Just for fun, again no pressure and no explanations. I ended up buying one of those simple sets of magnetic coloured letters to have on our fridge, and we had unending fun spelling words and non-words, and leaving silly one-word messages to each other in all languages we knew, whenever we happened to be in the kitchen.

Pedro has no idea that such things as ‘phonemic awareness’ exist. I, for one, found out about it when I started studying linguistics...

I hope this helps in some way!

Sincerely,
Madalena Cruz-Ferreira

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**Madalena Cruz-Ferreira** is the author of *Three is a crowd? Acquiring Portuguese in a trilingual environment*. (2006) Clevedon, Multilingual Matters [www.multilingual-matters.com]. She has received postgraduate degrees in linguistics from the University of Manchester, UK and is currently a Senior Lecturer at the National University of Singapore. Her main research interests are child multilingualism, multilingual phonology and intonation, and the language of science. She has lived in Singapore for over 10 years with her Swedish husband and their three trilingual children.

Do you have a question for our experts? Send them to editor@bicultralfamily.org!
Grace,
I am an American and my first language is English. I speak French, though, and want my son to grow up speaking and comprehending it. When I’m alone with him, I speak French, but when my husband is present, we both speak English to each other and to our son.

My son is 6 months old, so there isn’t a lot of speech development to analyze at this point. I notice he’s pretty quiet – he doesn’t do a lot of babbling. My husband doesn’t speak French, which is why I switch to English whenever he is around. My son’s exposure to French is pretty much just through me (talking/singing/reading books) and listening to French music CDs.

To add to the mix ... In August, when I go back to work, we’re going to hire a Cantonese-speaking babysitter to come over 16 hours/week. My husband speaks some Cantonese but doesn’t use it with our son. His parents, whom we see once a month, are Chinese immigrants who don’t speak much English, and we want him to be able to talk to his grandparents. Plus, we live in San Francisco, where a large portion of the Chinese community speaks Cantonese rather than Mandarin.

Given this situation, I have been wondering if I should continue with French, given that I’m the sole exposure. Will I hopelessly confuse my son?

Laine
First of all, congratulations! Both for your baby son and for your decision to raise your child as a dual language learner! I will try to address your questions but I will also suggest some readings for you and your husband at the end of this message. Since he is an infant, he is a simultaneous bilingual learner. Also, he has access to a second language via the community, grandparents, caregiver, and his father (Cantonese). He has access to another language via his mother. Research supports infant’s innate preparedness for dual language learning, and maintains that there are numerous cognitive advantages to developing bilingual skills from the onset.

The theory that simultaneous dual language learners have slower developing language skills has been refuted. For major developmental stages, the rate and pattern of language development is no different when compared to the child developing one language. However, my literature review has uncovered studies focusing on bilingualism, not trilingualism and beyond. In general, I would recommend choosing the second language to which your son would have the most exposure.

How does one make a decision as to which second language to use (the goal being proficient bilingualism)? The research maintains that consistent, enriched, sustained exposure from the onset is best. The ideal is equal exposure to the chosen languages.

Simultaneous dual language learners are likely to acquire full proficiency in an environment that values the second language (French or Cantonese), as well as the first (e.g. English). This situation is called additive bilingualism. In your case, you are the sole French-speaker and you will be returning to work in a few months, his exposure to French would be quite limited. On the other hand, he would have a good bit of exposure to Cantonese (nanny, grandparents, father, community). Of course, it may be that you may find some activity within the community that would provide him with exposure to French as well (e.g. parent/child play groups, and later bilingual preschools, etc).

The point is, the research suggests that additional exposure is needed when the community speaks that majority language (English) and the “one parent, one language” approach is used with one parent speaking the minority language (language not widely used in community). Remember, whatever language you choose, be consistent (e.g. only Cantonese with dad and grandparents, only English with mom, AND frequent exposure to cultural activities in the second language).

There is another issue to consider, and that is that we socialize our children via language. No matter the language, it is important to speak to our children in a language in which we feel comfortable speaking and in which we are fluent. This is vital not only because in this way we provide the best “model” for the child, but also because we convey values, beliefs, and intimacy via language.

I hope this is helpful. Please let me know if you need more information.

Here are some suggested readings:

- One child, Two Languages: Patton O. Tabors
- Dual Language Development and Disorders: Fred Genesee, Johanne Paradis, Martha B. Crago (geared for speech-language pathologist but also good for parents in my opinion)

Sincerely,
Grace M. Libardo Alvarez, M.S., CCC-SLP
Bilingual Speech-Language Pathologist
grace@biculturalfamily.org

Have a question for our experts? Send an email to: editor@biculturalfamily.org
It is exploration time!

For this activity, you will need 10-20 cards. You can purchase some index cards or just make some cards by cutting out pieces of paper about the size of index cards.

Write out location hints on the cards in your language, such as “This is where you brush your teeth” or “This is where we change the baby’s diapers.”

Place the cards (in the proper order of clues) around the house or outside and have your children go from one location after another based on the hints. So, for example, give your children the first card that says something, for example, “This is where you brush your teeth.” Then when your children get to the bathroom sink, there should be a card waiting there that sends them to the next spot and then at the next spot is a card that sends them to the next spot until they go through all of the cards. Make sure the last card goes somewhere special where there is a little surprise: it can be a piece of candy or a book that you’ll read or maybe the car where you’ll take a drive somewhere.

If your children can read, have them read the cards themselves. If your children can’t yet read, you can have them give you the card each time and you read the clue out loud. Make sure the clue isn’t read until all of the children are present.

Our children like to do a scavenger hunt in the evening right before bed. They have to put their pajamas on, brush their teeth and be all ready for bed. Then they hide in one room while my husband or I place the cards around the house. The final card directs them to a location in their bedroom where we have a note that says “good-night” to each of them. They snuggle into bed and after the light is off, my husband or I tell them a story.

Another idea is to have your scavenger hunt outdoors. This can be a lot of fun since there is more room to run.

Don’t forget to think about a scavenger hunt for playdates or playgroups! It is also fun for birthday parties or other parties when there are children who all speak the second language or to have fun with translation for the children who don’t speak your language.

Word finder...

This activity is fun for kids who are just learning to read or who are good readers already.

Create a grid with at least 4 squares across and 4 squares down (16 squares total) and then fill the squares with letters. You can repeat some letters if you want (especially vowels). Together with your child, find words in your language that are created by letters adjacent to one another (next to one another as well as corner to corner). You can also write down the words that you find and read over them again after you are done playing. You can create many grids with letters and try out other fun with letters and word creation.

Another variation on this is to cut out square pieces of paper that are the size of each of the squares in the grid. Then let your child place different letters over each square on the grid until it is full. Then have fun sounding out words! If your child can write, then have them write down the words that he/she or you find. Then have fun counting how many words were found in total!
sorting, sorting, sorting...

While you are sorting the laundry or going through DVDs or even looking through the junk mail on your table, get your children interested! Have them help in sorting through all kinds of objects and learning all about the differences in shapes, colors, sizes, weights and the words associated with each.

Give your child some toys or objects with different characteristics: round vs square, thin vs thick, etc. and have them work with you to organize them by different criteria: “All the things that don’t have straight sides go here and everything with a curved side goes here.”

When you are done with one sorting activity, change the criteria: “Ok, now everything that has yellow anywhere on it goes here, anything with blue goes here and the rest here”. Discuss the different characteristics: “Is this cube a square? What about this piece of paper?” “Look at this lemon, is it round? Hmmm, not really, huh, it is more oval, like this egg”.

You can also set out different containers for the different objects. If your child is old enough, an egg carton with different small items can be fun: rice in one compartment, kidney beans in another, peas, small stones, macaroni, etc. Give your child a spoon and they can move the items from one compartment to another. This is a great opportunity to spend time together discussing shapes, colors, sizes, etc. in the second language.

tea time!

Tea parties aren’t just for girls! They are for boys, girls, mom, dad, grandma and grandpa as well as friends, both human and pretend.

Don’t have the whole family around for a second language tea party in the afternoon? Then get out those stuffed animals, puppets, dolls and toys that only speak the second language and invite them to the party! There is nothing more believable than when you remind your child that Fido, the stuffed dog, “only speaks Chinese so we’ll all have to speak Chinese with him.”

As for the tea at the tea party, well, make-believe tea can be just as much fun as the real thing. Just make sure to set everything out nicely and to take time to sit and have fun with your children. Or, if they are speaking their second language just fine without you present, then leave them alone and let them have fun just themselves.
This activity is all about stories and writing. Time for everyone to get their creative juices flowing.

For children who are not yet able to write, have them narrate stories to you. You can write out the stories and then they can illustrate them. Your children will enjoy seeing their stories in print and probably will ask for you to read them over and over again. Don’t be surprised if they actually start to memorize the words of the stories! These are the first steps toward learning to actually read. So, when you read the stories to them, make sure to point to the words and speak slowly and with emotion appropriate for each part of the story.

Use a big piece of paper, section off a part for a picture and another part for the story so that your child can draw a picture for each page to illustrate the story below. Don’t tell them what they should draw. Let them illustrate what stands out most in their mind. Even if their picture doesn’t seem to match the story below (or the story at all) that is fine! The most important is that they are engaged and having fun with color, words, reading and writing!

Write out the words exactly as your child narrates them to you. If your child only wants to narrate in the majority language, you can try translating for them out loud, asking them if that was an accurate translation and then writing down the translation. Then each time you read the story it will be in the second language.

If your child can write, then create the pages for her so that she can write in the bottom part and add an illustration in the top part. She can either work with you to create a story or let her write it and illustrate it herself without your help. Try to not focus on words that are misspelled at this point. The fact that she is writing on her own is wonderful. Praise her for her effort and after having read it a few times you can point out some spelling pointers on the side. For example, you can say, “Oh, I wonder if this word is spelled this way. Hmmm, I wonder if there is another “r” here. What do you think? Should we sound it out?” If she is open to making spelling changes then you can continue with the discussion. However, if she seems resistant, then stop discussing it and come back to the topic later after giving it some time.

You can put together a few pages so that your child can create or narrate and illustrate a whole book! Make sure to hold onto these creations so that your child can see them when she gets older. These are the foundations of your bilingual family. Your child will be delighted to see how it all developed and will probably want to share it with her own children - your grandchildren!

Why not cook some spaghetti and have fun creating letters? Or if you’d rather not cook the spaghetti, you can use dried spaghetti and break it into pieces to create different letters. Make sure you don’t just leave your children with all of it or you’ll probably end up with a crazy mess instead of using the time to have fun with letters.

If your language has especially complex characters, then consider other items that you can use so that your children can have fun with writing. Maybe strings? Or rubber bands? Use little pebbles for the dots?

What about going for a walk in the park and collecting items that would make good letters? Then come home, or even while still in the park, write out words with the different items. This will be a great opportunity to use words in your language for the items as well as learning about letters and sounds.
LITTLE NOTES
Can your children already read? Then leave notes for them in your language wherever you can. Best is to leave notes that aren’t essential but ones that your children are eager to know. For example, if they need to complete something before they can go outside and play with their friends, write the note of what they have to complete in their second language. Or if they can have a dessert after dinner, write down some words describing the dessert so that they have to guess what it is. It is always a fine balance between frustrating your children and providing them and yourself the opportunity to have fun with language.

If you know your child is in a particularly bad mood when she has to clean her room or do her homework, then it is probably not the best time to have fun with little notes in your language since this could cause additional friction. Instead, find a time when your child is in a good mood, maybe when he wakes up in the morning or on the weekend when he might feel a little more open to such activities.

POSTCARDS!
Want a fun way to help your child keep in touch with family overseas while keeping his language skills alive? Get him motivated and involved by writing postcards to grandma and grandpa, cousins, aunts and uncles. Since the postcards are being sent to family who only speak the minority language, it is a great reason to HAVE to write the postcards in the second language! Let your child pick out the postcards for each family member or friend, or you can make your own postcards and have your child draw a picture or draw on one side.

If your child can’t yet write, have your child dictate the postcard contents to you in the community language and you can translate and then write out the translated words. You should try and encourage her to use her second language but don’t force it. Have fun with this project! Once the postcard is written out in translation, read him the postcard back and ask him if that is correct or if there should be any changes or additions.

One way to have a little fun with a child who insists on only speaking the community language: pretend to get the sentence completely wrong when you translate it so that he will have to correct you:

Child (speaking in community language): “Dear Grandma, when are you going to visit?”

Parent (speaking in minority language): “Ok, so you want me to write, ‘Happy Birthday Lena, we are coming to visit next month?”

Child (speaking in minority language): “No, it should be “Dear Grandma, when are you going to visit!”

Parent (speaking in minority language): “Ahhh, ok, yes, your are right. I translated it incorrectly. Good that you fixed that for me!”

LANGUAGE SPYING
Do you know about the game, “I Spy”? It is a great game to encourage your children to use their second language (or at least to listen to it!)

You basically describe something that you can see from where you are standing. For example, “I spy with my little eye something blue. It has a handle and I usually drink coffee from it.” Your children then try to guess what you are speaking about. When they figure it out, either it is the next person’s turn or you can keep being the one to “spy” things. Of course, if your children choose to take turns being the one who “spys” things, encourage them to do so in their second language.

For younger children, you can look right at the thing you are talking about to help them figure it out more quickly and so they won’t get completely discouraged. And it could be that they won’t want to be the one to “spy” anything. That is ok. If they are having fun listening to you describe things and enjoy trying to figure it out, then they are hearing you speak in your language and they are picking up the words that you are using.

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Thin Pancakes (crêpe)

Ingredients:
2 eggs
2 tablespoons melted butter or salad oil
1 1/3 cups milk
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt

IF USING A BLENDER: Place the ingredients in a blender container in the order listed. Cover and blend at high speed for 20 to 30 seconds. This batter can be used immediately.

WITHOUT BLENDER: Beat eggs, milk and oil with rotary egg beater or electric mixer until blended. Gradually add dry ingredients and beat until well mixed and smooth. Pour through a sieve to catch any lumps. Refrigerate this batter for 2 hours before cooking.

Cooking: Heat a frying pan on medium-high heat. When the pan is well heated, coat it with a thin layer of oil or butter. The pan is the right temperature when the batter sizzles slightly when poured into the pan. Pour in a few tablespoons of the batter into the frying pan, hold the pan and swirl it in a circle so that the batter coats the bottom of the pan and forms a thin layer. It should take around 1 minute for one side of the pancake to reach a light brown color. Using a spatula, flip over the pancake and cook it on the second side. Let it cook on the second side until done and then slide onto a warm plate. The pancakes can be layered one on top of the other until you have completed making all of them. If the pan was not the right temperature or if the pan was not seasoned enough with the butter or oil, no worries. Just throw away the first pancake and try it again after having adjusted the heat or adding more butter or oil. It may be necessary to add more butter and oil after making a few pancakes.

Fillings and Toppings: The choices are endless! Try filling with a bit of lemon and sugar, or whipped cream and berries. Melted chocolate can be lightly drizzled across the top, or fill with applesauce! Each culture has its favorite toppings and fillings so take some time to check out the internet for some ideas!
For some comfort food during these cold winter days. Gather the kids and make these together. Don’t forget to add your favorite filling & topping!

Pancakes, crêpe, pfannkuchen... whatever your language calls them, they are the perfect addition to a cold winter day! Although the word “pancake” is used across cultures, the meaning can be very different depending on where you are living and to whom you are speaking! To someone in the US, when you say you are going to make pancakes for dinner, they might think you were crazy. And for a European, the thick, fluffy American pancake is more like a dessert than a breakfast, especially when you smother it with butter and maple syrup. No matter where you come from, there is nothing like the smell of pancakes in any shape or form wafting in from the kitchen and taking that first steamy bite on a cold winter day. We hope you will enjoy making pancakes together with your family this season and make sure to have some language fun with the kids while you are at it! We have chosen two recipes for which you only need a frying pan. These should get you started but don’t stop there! Did you know there is even a pancake day? Start by learning a bit about pancakes around the world: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pancake](en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pancake).

**Thick Pancakes**

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 beaten egg
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil

In a mixing bowl stir together flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. In another mixing bowl combine egg, milk, and cooking oil. Add the egg, milk, oil mixture to the flour mixture all at once. Stir this mixture just until blended but still slightly lumpy (do not over mix!).

Heat a frying pan or griddle on medium heat. Coat with a little butter or cooking oil. When the pan is the right temperature, pour about a 1/4 cup of the batter into the pan for each pancake. To make smaller pancakes, use around one tablespoon for each. Cook until the pancakes are a golden brown. This usually is indicated on the uncooked side when many of the bubbles have popped and the edges of the pancake are dry. Using a spatula, flip over the pancakes, one by one, and cook on the second side until golden brown. Place pancakes on a plate, spread a thin layer of butter over each and add topping of choice. Maple syrup is a favorite topping in North America, as is jam, whipping cream, berries and more!
French Toast
(pain perdu)

Ingredients:
2 beaten eggs
1/2 cup milk
1/4 teaspoon vanilla
1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
1 tablespoon flour
5-6 1-inch-thick slices of bread (slightly stale bread is best!)

In a shallow bowl beat together eggs, milk, vanilla, and cinnamon. Add the tablespoon of flour and blend into the mixture until all is smooth.

Heat a frying pan on medium heat and lightly coat with butter or cooking oil. When the pan is hot, dip the bread into the mixture to coat it on both sides. For chewier breads, let the bread soak in the mixture for up to 30 seconds on each side. Lift out the bread and place onto the frying pan. Let cook for 2-3 minutes and then turn over with a spatula. Cook again for 2-3 minutes until both sides are a golden brown. Add more butter or cooking oil to the pan if necessary before cooking the next piece of dipped bread.

Traditional toppings in the US are a little melted butter and maple syrup or butter and powdered sugar. But the choices for toppings are endless. Do a bit of searching via the internet to see other ideas or do some experimentation on your own to see what you and your family like best!
Toasted (pain perdu) are not exactly pancakes but they are a closest cousins. And they certainly can warm our souls and hearts on a cold winter day - as well as our stomachs!

Did you know that waffles have their origins in the Middle Ages? “Waffle irons consisted of two metal plates connected by a hinge, with each plate connected to a wooden arm. Some plates had imprinted designs such as a coat-of-arms or landscape, while some had the now-familiar honeycomb/gridiron pattern”... (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waffle). French Toast, or as the French call it, “pain perdu” is best with some “forgotten bread” that is a few days old and even a little stale. What better way to use up that bread that has been laying around? Add a topping of your choice and you are set!

Waffles

Ingredients:
1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 egg yolks (don't throw out the whites, see below)
1 3/4 cups milk
1/2 cup cooking oil
2 egg whites

Start by turning on the waffle maker so that it will be ready when you have the batter done. Grease the waffle iron first if necessary.
Mix the flour, baking powder, and salt in a mixing bowl. In another bowl beat the egg yolks slightly and then beat in the milk and oil. Add the egg yolk mixture to the flour mixture all at once. Stir until everything is just combined but still lumpy (don’t overmix!).
In a small bowl beat the egg whites till stiff peaks form (the tips should be standing straight) and then gently fold them into the flour and egg yolk mixture, leaving a few fluffs of egg white. Remember, do not overmix!
Pour 1 to 1 1/4 cups of batter onto the grids of the preheated waffle iron. Close the lid quickly and do not open again until the waffle is done. Back it according to the waffle maker’s instructions (some will take longer than others, some have a light to indicate when done). When the waffle is done, use a fork to lift it off the grids. Continue with the rest of the batter to make more waffles.

Top with butter and maple syrup, butter and powdered sugar, whipped cream and berries, or your favorite topping. As with all of the recipes listed here - the choices are endless! Experiment!
Bundled up in a puffy down coat and a knit cap, he almost pulls my arm off with his excitement.

“Today I played with Hiroto-kun and ate an orange and blew bubbles. Mommy, I am so good at blowing bubbles,” the words flow out in Japanese.

“Maybe we should buy some bubbles and go to the park this weekend,” I reply in English.

“Let’s go to the park,” he cheers, arms raised up high into the air. This time Japanese peppered with English.

“We can go to the park this weekend,” I assure him and point to a Christmas tree with twinkling lights just ahead.

“Mommy, look. It is Christmas!” he says, his face shining almost as brightly as the tree. Two complete sentences in English.

“It’s so pretty. What do you want for Christmas?” I ask.

“Cake. I want cake,” he says, his words in English—slow and deliberate.

“What kind of cake?” I prompt him, not wanting to break the flow.

“Strawberry cake is yummy,” he smiles twirling around, the child like wonder of Christmas evident on his face.

And so it continues, one language replacing the other and that little boy barely misses a beat.

Those walks are my favorite time of day. A chance to catch up. A chance to see what’s new in the neighborhood. A chance to shift from the Japanese of his day care life to the English of his home life.
In the March/April issue of Multilingual Living Magazine...

multilingual families...
Raising children in more than TWO languages? Adding a third or fourth language to your family’s language mix? Tips, advice and articles to help you in your multilingual, multicultural journey!

an expert interview...
A unique opportunity to learn what an expert has to say about raising multilingual children - successes, struggles, frustrations and real-world advice.

multilingual state of affairs...
What is it like to raise a bilingual or multilingual child in Japan? Or what about Spain? Each country has its unique challenges, frustrations and wonderful rewards!

columnists return...
Tracey, Lilian, Suzanne and more share their personal expertise and human observations wrapped together with their delightful wit and acute perceptions.

articles, articles, articles...
As always, you can expect quality articles on the topics that interest you the most! Enlightening information, support and insights into the world of what it means to be a bilingual and multilingual family. Stay tuned for another issue packed full of research, personal accounts, activities and inspiration!

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**Balanced Bilinguals**

The literature on bilingualism frequently spotlights one particular group of bilinguals whose competences in both languages are well developed. Someone who is approximately equally fluent in two languages across various contexts may be termed an equilingual or ambilingual or, more commonly, a balanced bilingual... Balanced bilingualism is sometimes used as an idealized concept. Fishman (1971) argued that rarely will anyone be equally competent across all situations... Balanced bilingualism is also a problematic concept for other reasons. The balance may exist at a low level of competence in the two languages. (*Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, Page 9).

**Codeswitching and Codemixing**

One issue raised by parents and teachers of children of differing ages is when one language is mixed with another. Terms such as Hinglish, Spanglish, Tex-Mex and Wenglish... are often used in a derogatory fashion to describe what may have become accepted language borrowing within a particular community... If a power conflict exists between different ethnic groups, then language may be perceived as a prime marker of a separate identity, and codeswitching may seem disloyal. Monolinguals may have negative attitudes to codeswitching, believing that it shows a deficit, or a lack of mastery of both languages. However, it tends to be those who are more fluent in a language that code-switch (Meisel, 2004). Yet bilinguals themselves may be defensive or apologetic about their codeswitching and attribute it to laziness or sloppy language habits. However, codeswitching is a valuable linguistic tool. It does not typically happen at random. There is usually purpose and logic in changing languages. It is using the full language resources that are available to a bilingual, usually knowing that the listener fully understands the code-switches. One main language (called the matrix language) provides the grammatical frame or rules for grammar (Myers-Scotton, 2002). Codeswitching thus involves a rule-bound (e.g. word order, verb endings) use of the secondary language, as the second language insertions will fit those matrix language rules. (*Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, Page 109).

**Bilingualism and Cognition**

[The] traditional expectation [is] that bilingualism and intelligence are linked negatively. The conception has been that bilingualism leads to lower intelligence. Research from the 1920s to the 1960s supported that conception. Recent research has shown that a simple negative relationship is a misconception. The narrow view of intelligence contained in IQ tests and severe flaws in the design of early research combine with other limitations to cast doubts on this negative link. Rather, the need is to specify the language ability levels of bilinguals... and to ensure like is compared with like. Since 1960, the indication has been that a more positive relationship between bilingualism and cognitive functioning can be expected, particularly in ‘balanced’ bilinguals.

A review of research on cognitive functioning and bilingualism suggests that two extreme conclusions may both be untenable. To conclude that bilingualism gives undoubted cognitive advantage fails to consider the various criticisms and limitations of research in this area. It also fails to recognize that there are studies where bilinguals may sometimes be at a disadvantage compared with monolinguals. However, to conclude that all the research is invalid fails to acknowledge that the judgment of the clear majority of researchers tends to be that there are many positive links between bilingualism and cognitive functioning with bilinguals having some distinct cognitive advantages over monolinguals. Such advantages are not just individual but societal and global: ‘those who envision a future world speaking only one tongue... hold a misguided ideal and would do the evolution of the human mind the greatest disservice’ (Whorf, 1956, p. 244). (*Foundations of Bilingual Education Bilingualism*, Page 628).
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**Expert Research**
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