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July-August 2006

Features

30 Welcoming Baby: traditions from around the world
Birth rituals provide children with sense of community and culture, by Lisette and Will Austin

40 Following the East Wind: An International Marriage, Part 2
In Austria during the post-war reconstruction years, when foreigners were few and bicultural couples rare...
by Waltraud Kim

20 Foreign Language Education Needs to be Available for Younger Students
Senator Roach makes an appeal for elementary school foreign language learning, by Senator Pam Roach

16 Talking and Listening!
We all know that the key to multilingual success is in getting our children to speak but how do we go about this?
by Alice Lapuerta

28 Expand Your Child’s World
Involving bilingual families and English language learners in the classroom and at home, by Anneke Forzani

44 Bilingual Acquisition
Fred Genesee, Professor of Psychology at McGill University, Montreal, dispels our most troubling concerns
by Fred Genesee

Stay Informed

14 Frequently Asked Questions
Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert, the author of Language Strategies for Bilingual Families, provides answers

25 Book Review
“Childhood Bilingualism: Research on Infancy through School Age”
“Spiel mit Deutsch: Kinder als Sprachforscher und Entdecker”

52 Ages & Stages
0-2: Lullabies
3-5: Learning an Instrument
6-10: Dancing
11-18: Parent’s Music

18 Ask Harriet
Extended family critical of children’s manners and Father-In-Law’s inappropriate comments.

36 Get Motivated!
Recharge those language batteries!

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Spotlights

8 Becky’s Top Tips!
Music and games

7 Mailbag
Letters From You!

43 Website Spotlights
Websites worth visiting

50 Humor & Fun
A Socratic Dialog

55 News Around the World
Global Events

35 Going Dual?
Bilingual Books

47 How We Met
Meet Juliette & Dave

56 Final Words of Wisdom
Words from the Wise...

Columns

22 One Family One Language
“Multilingualism versus the English-Only Movement and the Demise of Bilingual Education” Lilian speaks out about the English-Only campaign in the U.S.

12 Eurapsody
“Multilingualism Strikes a Football Star” with the World Cup in full swing, Clo reminds us that multilingualism touches the lives of even the rich and famous!

38 Between Grandparent and Grandchild
“First Birthdays, First Things; Changes in Direction” American day of independence stirs Sharon to contemplate culture and continuity

48 Multicultural Melange
“The Speckled Band: Or Learning English with Sherlock Holmes” Alice remembers what it was like to be captivated while first learning the English language

26 The Single Language Spouse
“Connecting to Our Second Culture” Colleen finds ways to connect with the Russian language and culture
From the Editor’s Desk...

IS THERE ANYONE OUT THERE NOT WATCHING?

With the World Cup in full swing it is hard not to think about culture and language. Since we only have basic cable television in our home, we have been forced to watch the games on the Spanish-language station! In many ways it has been a delight: We have learned some key words in Spanish, all relating to soccer/football (GOL!!!!), and are learning a lot about the American Spanish-speaking consumer thanks to the targeted commercials. So despite the fact that we can’t understand the details of what is happening in each game, we are having a delightful time and are feeling uniquely connected with our multicultural world.

As you have probably already noticed, we now have both a pdf version of our magazine as well as the online offshoot! We are still doing research on an affordable way to have Multilingual Living Magazine printed and shipped to your door. To start, we are offering low-cost subscriptions for the downloadable pdf version of Multilingual Living Magazine. Our July-August issue will be free but starting with our September-October issue, only subscribers will receive it. Please, please, please consider subscribing to Multilingual Living Magazine! Your subscription will help keep a great magazine alive and the entire Bilingual/Bicultural Family Network will benefit from your financial support!

If you are looking for motivation, tips and support, this is the issue for you! Becky has outdone herself with a fabulous list of summer music and game recommendations. Anneke, from Language Lizard, introduces us to her favorite Dual Language books. If you haven’t yet learned about these books, here is your opportunity.

With the ongoing discussions in the United States about English Only and immigration, it is no wonder that a few of our contributing columnists and writers are focusing on such issues. Even if you don’t live in the United States, these issues and questions speak to a global audience.

Lisette Austin has written a wonderful article about family traditions. We are often overwhelmed with our desire to connect to our roots when a new baby arrives. Keeping in touch with our traditions is essential for maintaining a healthy connection with who we are.

A Washington State Senator in the US, Pam Roach, has been putting a tremendous amount of effort into getting language learning into schools at earlier grades. She shares with us her thoughts on the issue and suggestions for implementation.

We have more wonderful contributions than space to discuss them so I encourage you to read through the magazine and see for yourself! Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have anything on your mind. Please let me or Alice (editor@biculturalfamily.org) know what you think of the new pdf printable format! It takes a lot of work so we’d like to know if you think it is worth it.

We’d like to thank each and every one of you who has taken the time to share your thoughts, dreams, frustrations and delights with us! You are the reason we keep this magazine alive. Each email that you send us is received with great delight so keep them coming!

I would like to send out a special THANK YOU to Oliver Kim - this pdf is what it is thanks to your help!

Corey Heller
Publisher/Editor, corey@biculturalfamily.org
My name is Joana Sommerkamp. I have been reading your website and found it really interesting and helpful, thanks!!

I was born and raised in Spain, my mother is Portuguese and my father German, I speak both their languages plus Spanish since most of my life I grew up in Spain.

My partner is half Dutch half Japanese and we communicate in English.

January 2006 our son Mark was born in London and, obviously he has been hearing all sort of languages. I read years ago it was considered this could lead to confusion and delay speech on babies. But my sister-in-law is a pediatrician and she encouraged all the family to speak their own language. I am really happy about it and, being myself always used to hear several languages at home, I know it can only be a great advantage for our baby in the future.

Best Regards,
Joana Sommerkamp Cardoso

Great web site, congratulations!
Be in touch soon!

Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa
(Author of Raising Multilingual Children and The Multilingual Mind).

My husband found your site a couple of weeks ago and I signed up for the newsletter. I found it to be a fabulous resource for families like ours.

Christianne Meneses Jacobs
Publisher/Editor
IGUANA magazine

I just looked at the magazine.
This is something we really need! I’ll be a regular reader of this one!

Melissa

This is terrific, thank you! Please let us know how to subscribe when available in print.

Lucia

I’ve just spent some time reading the magazine and think it’s fantastic!

The articles are very interesting and I can’t wait for the June issue to continue reading about the Korean love story.

Kirsten
Now that summer is here, many of us will be spending more time in the car, plane, train – traveling to visit friends and family or just driving to the beach, zoo, or anywhere else to prevent the kids from driving us crazy. Fortunately, this time doesn’t have to be wasted. There are a number of great CDs out there to introduce kids to different genres and continue to reinforce the idea of communicating through language and music. These are some of my favorites from MagellansToyShop.com. Stop by and have a listen or look for them at other specialty toy and music stores.

Because summer should be a time to take it easy I’ve included some calming, gentle music. And because we all have children, there are some more lively selections as well.

**Lirica Infantil vol. #5 – Letras, Números y Colores**

José-Luis Orozco is a well-known educator, author, and recording artist who shares the heritage and culture of Latin America through his books and music. This CD is just one example of the many exceptional recordings to his credit. Orozco’s music is fun and upbeat, teaching basic concepts such as the colors, days of the week, and vowels while keeping listeners entertained. Many of the songs are in both Spanish and English – great for speakers of one language to learn the second.

**World Party! Songs from All Over the World Chosen Just for You**

When it’s time to get yours kids up and moving, this is the music you need to turn on. There’s rumba, salsa, merengue, and so much more. And you’ll hear all kinds of instruments from the harp to the didgeridoo. The liner notes include a small paragraph on each song with information about the instruments, the songs’ origins, and their meanings. This disc is so much fun, you will enjoy it as much as your kids.

**WHO IS BECKY?** Becky Dolan is the mother of two and has degrees in early childhood and elementary education. She has combined her life-long loves of children, language, and learning to create Magellan’s Toy Shop – an online specialty store that features Learning and Fun from Around the World.
Ça fait rire les enfants
by Josée Vachon

I was really excited when I found this CD from Josée Vachon. She mixes French, Canadian, and American traditional music with her own original songs to create a great collection of work for children. The music is definitely for kids, but it will entertain parents as well. Les non non blues is one of my favorite tracks. This disc will be getting a lot of playtime in my car this summer!

Chinese Lullabies
by the Beijing Angelic Choir

This CD appeals to me for a number of different reasons. First of all, the music is absolutely gorgeous. Ethereal and relaxing, this is perfect for putting little ones to sleep while also immersing them in language. The songs are from different provinces of China and, therefore, are in a number of dialects, so this is not a teaching CD. With that said, it is one that should not be missed.

Oyasumi: Japanese Lullabies
and Restful Melodies
by Aiko Shimada & Elizabeth Falconer

This winner of the Parents’ Choice Gold Award is another that should not be missed by parents of little ones. Aiko Shimada is a Seattle-based artist and her Japanese and English vocals combine with Elizabeth Falconer’s koto music create what Parents’ Choice called an “exquisite album . . . [that] can carry listeners of any age to a place of quiet and enfolding peace.”

National Geographic - Around the World Lullabies: Dream Songs from Around the World

You know you are going to get high quality when it comes with the name National Geographic. There is over one hour of music with 37 traditional and nontraditional lullabies from every corner of the globe – England to Iran, Argentina to Japan. Also included is a foldout with a full color map and stories behind each lullaby as well as proverbs, quotations, and some interesting facts about sleep and dreaming. It’s a very relaxing, intriguing, and exotic collection.
Becky’s Top Game Picks

Spending time together has never been more fun (and educational)!

Ah, Summer! It’s a time to relax and get away from it all. Read a good book. Go to the beach. Find a way to entertain your kids for two months . . . . So, maybe it’s not all rest and relaxation, but these games are a great way to have fun with your kids and pass the time. Plus, you’ll get to sneak in a little learning.

Maybe we’ll just keep that part to ourselves.

Magnetic Poetry

If you don’t already know about Magnetic Poetry, you don’t know what you’re missing. These magnetic word tile sets come in a wide variety of languages and themes, and they are a great way to build vocabulary and develop creativity. Beginning readers can pick out a chosen word from a small group. Older kids can use them to write their own masterpieces or silly sayings. I’m sure you’ll come up with your own ideas to use this excellent learning tool.

Bleff

For older kids and adults, Bleff is a great Spanish vocabulary game from Argentina. Players need to write down the definition of a given word. If they don’t know it, they must come up with one of their own that is convincing enough to fool their opponents. You can be as silly or as serious as you want to be, as long as others believe you know the words’ meanings so you can advance around the board to win the game.

WHO IS BECKY? Becky Dolan is the mother of two and has degrees in early childhood and elementary education. She has combined her life-long loves of children, language, and learning to create Magellan’s Toy Shop – an online specialty store that features Learning and Fun from Around the World.

Try to fit a stop at Magellan’s Toy Shop into your summer and check out one of these games or look for them at other online or specialty toy stores. Then take it outside, on vacation, or institute a family game night. Playing games together is a great way to spend time together and keep the lines of communication open between you and your kids. And did I mention that these ones incorporate some learning, too? Oh, yes. I was supposed to keep that quiet.

MindTrap

Looking for a great family game – in French? This is it. There are over 500 puzzles and word plays that will make you scratch your head. Then when you hear the answer you’ll realize that you knew the answer all along. It’s a great way to pass the time during those long car trips since you don’t have to worry about moving pieces around a game board.

Aleph Bet Adventure

Here’s a game for the younger set. Aleph Bet Adventure is much like Candy Land, except this game exposes kids to the Hebrew Aleph Bet. You’ll also be working on pre-reading skills such as letter recognition and initial letter sounds. That’s great knowledge to have in any language.


Borderline is a great game to help kids learn about geography. It’s played a lot like the game Crazy 8’s where each player has to play a card that has a country, region, or body of water that borders something from the previous card. It’s a quick game that’s lots of fun, and easy to pack on holiday.

Opposites Dominoes

These opposites dominoes from Henbea are available in a number of languages. They’re made in Spain out of sturdy plastic and have simple, colorful pictures that cover all the basics: happy/sad, black/white, first/last, etc. What’s also great is that they come with a little, plastic carrying case, complete with handle. And just in case you need some help, there is an answer key which really comes in handy if you are learning the language along with your child.
The football World Cup has just kicked off in Germany, promising an exciting month of sports entertainment. One of the top five players in the world has recently been in the soccer market and world press spotlight, having announced his decision to leave AC Milan for Chelsea London, mainly due to...his son’s multilingualism!

The phenomenal Ukrainian star, Andriy Shevchenko (a.k.a Sheva for his fans), joined AC Milan in 1999 and has built up a glorious career in the past seven seasons, scoring a record 173 goals. While in Italy, he also met the love of his life: American top model Kristen Pazik. The couple, who speak Italian with one another, married in 2001 and their son was born in 2003. Kristen is currently expecting her second child. Sensibly, the issue of their family language came up. They do not speak nor understand each other’s language, and they do not feel comfortable enough with their command of Italian to consider raising their kids in Italy.

Therefore, despite Sheva’s stardom at AC Milan, they have decided to move to England, where Kristen can be supported by an environmental language that is the same as her maternal language. AC Milan, regretfully, is negotiating the transfer with the Chelsea club.

“The language issue is obviously an excuse,” says NY-based Simone Sandri, a reporter for Italian sports daily Il Corriere dello Sport. “Sheva has been welcomed like in a family at AC Milan and has been treated really well; it is obvious that his decision is dictated by financial reasons; he could have solved the family linguistic dilemma comfortably even in Milan, if he wanted to.” (His compensation at Chelsea is estimated at 118K UK£ a week).

I might be naïve, but having found myself in a similar situation (that is, raising my kids in France while my command of French is far from perfect), I would like to believe that the fascinating, yet doubt-stirring, facets of multilingualism had more weight in their decision than what the reporters claim. I prefer to believe that in today’s world, where public personalities, especially football stars, run after the extra million bucks and find numerous ways to make their image work for them, there is a man who is a father and a husband first and is seriously putting his child’s linguistic development before his celebrity status (although the latter is far from suffering from the decision!).

Due to the concomitance of the football World cup, the couple was not reachable for a comment. The burning question I had for them was:

Once they move to the UK, will they continue speaking Italian with each other?
Multilingual Living Magazine - July/August 2006

Multilingualism Strikes a Football Star

Make sure to visit Clo’s column each month where she will share her knowledge, ideas, tips and inspirations. Clo is an Italian native currently based in France with her Belgian partner and raising a quadrilingual child. Learn more about Clo at her MULTITONGUE KIDS blog: www.multitonguekids.blogspot.com.

Photo: ©Istockphoto.com/askhamdesign
“These brief chats in the cabin of a plane, waiting for a bus or in a queue for passports are inspiring to me. We bond quickly even though we may never meet again and exchange experiences.”

Most Frequently Asked Questions

By Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert
We travel a lot as a family, back to Europe in the summer to visit the families in England or France or around Asia as tourists. We often attract attention as people overhear us speaking English and French to our children and the children replying bilingually. People are curious as to where we are from and where we live. Usually it is another bilingual family comparing notes or a family considering bilingualism, or someone who knows a family member or friend who is married to someone from another country. These brief chats in the cabin of a plane, waiting for a bus or in a queue for passports are inspiring to me. We bond quickly even though we may never meet again and exchange experiences. Whatever the languages and circumstances I try to give as much advice as possible. Here you can see several questions which come up time and time again; they apply to mixed-language couples, those thinking of bilingual schooling or teaching a language at home.

**Which language will our child speak first?** With mixed-language couples children usually speak the language of the mother first, simply because they spend more time with her in the beginning. Babies also need to bond with their mothers and do this by listening and watching her intently in the first year. So they copy and repeat the maternal language first. The father’s language will appear later, usually after the baby has begun speaking the mother’s language and there is often some overlap when the child might mix both languages together.

**Will one language be affected by the other language?** Yes, there is often what we call language interference. This is when the sounds of each language might get mixed up or a child might use the grammatical structure of one language with another. Verbs might be in the wrong place or the pronunciation may be that of the other language. A stronger language may interfere with a weaker one with the child using the rules he learnt for the stronger one for the weaker one. This takes time and practice to work itself out.

**What happens if one parent has less time with the child?** One issue that comes up a lot with mixed-language families or those teaching a language themselves at home is that one parent may be working away, at weekends or late at night and hardly sees the child. The child may not have enough time with the parent to be able to actively use their language. He or she might understand but not reply back which is called passive language use. So parents need to make one-to-one time with their children where the language is given chance to grow through reading, singing, watching films together, or activities like cooking or preparing for a festival.

**What kind of school should we choose?** Bilingual families often worry over the choice of school knowing that this can have a big impact on their child’s language use. Studies show that the language of school is usually the first or strongest language for a child. They make friends and have a social peer group which will influence their language use. Your decision depends on the choice available. Some areas have good bilingual school, although they are usually private schools. Other families opt for a good local school which supports the language where they live. Otherwise you can choose a school which uses the child’s weaker language, so that will be given some support. Parents must feel comfortable in the school themselves and be able to participate and help with homework and school activities.

**How will my child adapt to a school in a language different to that at home?** Children starting a school with a language different to their home language will find it hard in the beginning and it usually takes three to six months for a child to adapt and become fluent in the school language. The teacher needs to keep on speaking the school language even though the child may not respond initially. Parents and teachers need to be reassuring and patient with the child, explaining why he or she is attending the school, and make efforts to communicate and work together.

**What can we do at home to help our child become bilingual?** The parent’s attitude is very important. If you are positive and make efforts to be bilingual your children will follow. At home you can provide your children with as much reading, writing and games materials as possible. You don’t need to spend a lot of money; you can create your own, surf the internet, photocopy or borrow from libraries or from friends.

**Should we be strict with languages in the home?** Yes, in the beginning young children like to know who is speaking which language. Once they have reached the age of three or four they have a good idea and will understand if you mix languages or talk to them in two or three languages. Older children prefer a more relaxed approach, changing languages to suit the conversation or group of people.

**How can I learn more about Bilingualism?** There are several books for bilingual families available, and there are websites for information or to chat with other bilingual families. One of the best ones to start with is Colin Baker’s Parents and Teachers Guide to Bilingualism (Multilingual Matters) which answers many questions and is easily readable.

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How can we encourage our children’s language development and vocabulary? How can we get our children to talk more with us?

**TRY THESE HELPFUL TIPS FOR ANY LANGUAGE!**
Allow your child to speak. This might sound obvious, but before you brush this point aside as irrelevant, stop and reflect for a while. Are you really listening to your child when s/he speaks? Sure, we are all guilty at times of just answering absent-mindedly “uh-huh” to whatever our child just said, and we continue to read our newspaper. This does happen to all of us. We should try to actively listen to what our child is telling us.

Give your child your whole attention. Look at at your child: make eye-contact. Listen for content, not form. In other words, don’t be overly concerned about correct pronunciation or grammar. Respond to what they tried to say, not how they just said it. If you really do not have time to listen to your child at the moment, tell her you will listen to her at a later time.

Let Them Finish. Refrain from asking your child mid-sentence to speak slowly, to repeat the sentence again, or to start over again. This is a conversation killer and won’t motivate your child to speak correctly or at all. Try this, tip instead: when she is done speaking, repeat the correct sentence back to her with the manner and vocabulary that you would like to encourage.

Take Your Time. You just asked your child something. He is taking forever to respond. Don’t put your child under time pressure. Give him time to respond!

No Interrupting. When he finally decides to speak, don’t interrupt. Let him finish his sentences.

Praise lavishly. Positive feedback works miracles: “You just explained that very well, indeed!” “Wow, how well you said that in Spanish! I’m impressed!”

Be Involved. Build up on your child’s topic of interest. Talk about what they are doing now, what they are seeing, experiencing. Set some time aside before they go to sleep. Lie down next to them and just let them talk. Listen unconditionally, lovingly. Aside from this being good practice for your little one, it will also strengthen your parent-child bond.

Get Started Now. If you have a baby who doesn’t speak yet, talk anyway. This is easier for some parents than for others. Maybe you are like me and feel awkward conducting a monologue with an unresponsive baby. It is tempting to just submit to silence. What helps is to just talk your way through the day and to comment on every activity that you are doing: “Now I am changing your diaper. Let’s put on a fresh shirt. Let’s get you ready, we have to go shopping now …”

No Pressure. We all have good days and bad days. Some are better than others. Speak a lot with your child on “fluent” days and on days when they are less prone to talk. Don’t pressure them when they don’t feel like talking.

Be a model. Speak slowly, calmly and clearly. Yes, that means good grammar! Tell other people in your environment (grandparents and other family members) to do the same.

Speak Correctly. Don’t swallow any sounds or syllables when you speak, especially at the end of words.

Expand Vocabulary. Read. Read. Read out loud! This is one activity that guarantees the expansion of your child’s vocabulary in whatever language you do it.

Here are further activities recommended by Childcare Aware that you can do at home with your child to encourage language development and expand vocabulary:

❯ Put household objects in a box and have your child name each one as he removes it.
❯ Look at photo albums and name the people you see.
❯ Make basic books by cutting and gluing favorite pictures from old magazines.
❯ Sing simple songs such as Old MacDonald and leave words out for your child to fill in.
❯ Play easy games such as naming body parts, foods or articles of clothing.
❯ Put simple storybooks in a basket for you and your child to choose from everyday.

Source: www.childcareaware.org
Harriet Cannon, M.C. is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Consultant with over 20 years experience specializing in working with clients in life transitions; career, international relocation, bicultural and multicultural relationships and family issues.

Ms Cannon has lived and worked in the United States and internationally for both the American Foreign Service and Puente Bretagna, a Chilean group of psychologists and Psychiatrists.

Currently Harriet Cannon has her counseling and consulting office in Seattle, Washington. She consults throughout the Puget Sound to groups, international organizations and businesses. Most recently Ms Cannon was invited to present her research on the life stories of multicultural mothers and daughters at the International Family Therapy Conference in Washington DC in June 2005.

For more information visit Harriet’s web site at www.harrietcannon.com
My father in law, who is from Brazil, has always made strong sexist comments to me about my work and how I run the household. Now I have 2 and 4 year old daughters and I really want to put a stop to this. What should I do? (I was also born in Brazil but came to the US at the age of 10.)

If your father in law is making comments that undermine your parental authority or is blatantly hostile it is time to take action. Talk to your husband about how much the two of your think this behavior is cultural and how much might be anger about something else in his relationship with you or your husband. Factor in whether your father in law could have alcohol, depression or other problems. Either way, it is wise to confront the triangulation. Dad is harassing YOU about the way BOTH of you have decided to manage your work and the household. It is time for your husband to talk with HIS father in support of you. It is important for the adult child (in this case your husband) to talk to his/her own parent to break the triangulation which can undermine your relationship and parenting. If your father in law has other problems that need airing, the father/son talk can refocus to the real problem.

No one is asking your father in law to change his opinion about women’s roles, just to keep them to himself in front of you and your girls or use benign humor not aggression. If this answer does not seem to be a supportive solution to your problem, consider seeing a professional counselor with your husband to develop a plan.

We are going to Finland to visit my in laws for the summer. Two years ago when we visited Finland, my kids were 3 and 5. Family and friends were understanding and encouraging in helping my children improve their Finnish but they were quite critical of my kid’s “American” manners. I am more concerned this will happen again and be more hurtful. How shall I handle this concern?

It is common human nature to be critical of what we don’t understand. Your extended family and friends probably think they are “helping” you properly raise your child. Sociologists will call this an example of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the process of assuming that your cultural way of doing something is better; manners, gender roles practices, jokes, how you spend a Sunday afternoon etc. The ethnocentric practice you are responding to is competition for “best practices” in child rearing. There is also an underlying fear on the part of your extended family as they see your children growing up Finnish American, not Finnish. They probably unconsciously fear the more “foreign” your children’s attitudes become, the weaker the grandparent-grandchild relationship will become.

Prepare for your summer trip. Take heart and take action. You and your spouse can use humor and YOUR understanding of how to cross cultural bridges to talk to your children. Think about what your kids need to know about rules and roles in Finland. Consider making a weekly Finnish manners, customs and food day. Concretely talk to the children about what Finns would find odd or offensive. Help the children understand criticism about manners is cultural not personal. Do some role playing. Use humor and have fun with it. Make it a game to be good “Finnish” citizens for the day.

It would be a good strategy to talk to your family about how you are “educating” your children with Finnish traditions but remind them of the large influence for 5 and 7 year olds is the peer group at school. Highlight the blood bond and love your children will have for family and Finland when everyone is stressing the positive as your children live in two worlds. Give yourself time to be alone with your spouse to recharge your self esteem boundaries, remembering ethnocentricism is cultural not personal.
In many countries, children begin learning a second language in the early elementary school grades, even preschool. Unfortunately, the concept of requiring foreign language instruction in most U.S. schools is, well, foreign. Most Washington K-12 students don’t have the chance to study any language other than English until they are in middle school or high school. In fact, foreign language isn’t even a state graduation requirement. (Some colleges and universities use it as an entrance requirement.)

Our state’s public schools should make foreign language instruction a higher priority. It should be on par with basic subjects like reading, writing, math, science and social studies. My belief was reinforced after attending a recent conference hosted by the Washington Association for Language Teaching. The association belongs to the Washington State Coalition for International Education, whose Web site is http://internationalaledwa.org.

Look at the experience of language instruction in other parts of the world. In Portugal, students learn English from grades four through 10, and they study French in 11th and 12th grades. In Honduras, children of means are placed in foreign language schools by their parents, who can choose from Japanese, Arabic, Italian, Chinese and American (English) schools. Students there begin a total immersion experience in first grade and quickly speak their second language fluently and without an accent. The U.S. system ignores the fact that our country’s

What will it take? In the United States, most students lack the exposure to a second language until high school. Perhaps it is time for politicians to take a stand? Read what this Washington State Senator has to say and her suggestions for a solution.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION NEEDS TO BE AVAILABLE FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

By Sen. Pam Roach
current and future economic and security needs include bilingual individuals.

Every American child should have access to early instruction in a language other than the language spoken at home. Right now, that standard is held only for students who are in an English Language Learners program (formerly called ESL).

I have three goals when it comes to foreign languages:

1) Children born of English-speaking parents should have an early chance at learning other languages. The elementary level is the best time for language learning. Foreign language instruction gives students some understanding of a world outside of their own. Learning a foreign language is “mental weightlifting.” Studies show that kids in foreign language programs tend to score higher on verbal and nonverbal intelligence tests (something to think about at WASL time). The younger the student is when exposed to a second language, the more apt the learning is to produce a skill that is accent free and fluent.

2) Parents who were raised speaking a language other than English should be encouraged to use that language at home, or at least enough to transfer this language and culture to their own children. It’s important for foreign-language-speaking children to be immersed in English early so they can be assimilated easily into American society. It’s also important for these students to remember their original language. Knowledge of a second language will benefit their future and foster appreciation of their heritage. It can enable them to be a resource to our global economy and national security.

3) Students and business leaders should prioritize Chinese and Spanish to give Washington’s economic future better placement in the world. Washington’s economy is tied to world trade. The next generation will need a second language for employment opportunities. Speaking only English won’t be enough for many future American workers both here and abroad.

The key step is for the Legislature to make foreign language instruction a higher priority. That is why I introduced Senate Bill 6899, which would require Washington school districts, starting with the 2006-07 school year, to provide sequential, articulated Chinese and Spanish language programs from kindergarten through 12th grade. All students would be allowed to take such a class.

My proposal also would allow a school district to use noncertificated staff to teach programs or classes taught as part of a world language program if these instructors can speak and write the language fluently, and speak English. Such classes could be taught by parents or others willing to volunteer, so it wouldn’t be expensive for schools to get started. Although the Legislature didn’t pass SB 6899, I plan to introduce an identical bill next year.

Spanish is the one foreign language that is taught in nearly all Washington high schools, but Chinese is taught in only about 5 percent of them. (Portland, Oregon, has started a Chinese immersion program for its schools.) There are economic, cultural and even security reasons to offer Chinese in our schools. Chinese is spoken by 1.3 billion people worldwide, and China has emerged as an economic superpower. In U.S. homes, Chinese is now the third most commonly spoken language, after English and Spanish.

If we want Washington’s public schools to really prepare students for the 21st century, we need to make foreign language instruction a greater part of it - and soon.

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Multilingualism versus the English-Only Movement and the Demise of Bilingual Education

By Lilian W.

As the world increasingly finds value in multilingualism, the United States appears to be going in the opposite direction. Lilian shares her views as a native Brazilian living on American soil.

Immigration has been a hotly debated topic this year; not only in the U.S. Senate, but all throughout the country. During this past month certain news stories related to immigration motivated me to think and write about issues such as the movement to make English the official language of the United States and even issues that have been debated in the past, like bilingual education, because these subjects are closely related to raising bilingual or multilingual children.
When I was an English major in Brazil and studied the history of the English language during my senior year, I was surprised to find out that several states in this country treated immigrants very harshly regarding the issue of language, forbidding them and their children to speak their native languages in school and even in churches and other places. On June 4th, the New York Times published a story precisely about this. The article explored how children of French immigrants in Maine were forbidden to speak French in school in the 1950s and 60s and how now the French language is having a comeback in that state and children and grandchildren of French immigrants are learning it. It seems contradictory that in spite of all these efforts they learn English and that his own grandparents could have achieved more if they had learned the language.

One of the first things Mr. Vento said in the interview, paraphrasing President Roosevelt, was: “Any man who says he’s an American but something else also isn’t an American at all. We have room for one flag, and that’s the American flag, we have room for the one language here and that’s English, room for one loyalty, and this is loyalty to America. 1907 – Theodore Roosevelt. That’s where I got the sign to put out here.” I immediately thought of my sons when I heard this. Kelvin is very proud to tell people that he has two passports, an American and a Brazilian one. At the young age of four he already knows to raise their children as French speakers feel sad about their decision now. Many of them are making great efforts to re-learn it themselves and to send their children to French speaking schools so they can rescue their language and cultural heritage. Fortunately, it seems to be working and, in the case of Maine, it does help that the state – who once shunned the French immigrants – now celebrates and supports them. It is still the case, though, that many families of working class immigrants simply do not have the energy or resources to ensure that their children learn the parents’ languages and cultures -my next door Indian and Bangladeshi neighbors, whose boys only speak English, come to my mind at this point.

“many families of working class immigrants simply do not have the energy or resources to ensure that their children learn the parents’ languages and cultures”

to curb foreign languages in the past and present, the United States does not have an official language; a fact that I was very surprised to learn and which is the main motivation for the continued interest and support to the English-only movement (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English-only_movement).

I live in Philadelphia and last week I was driving around listening to the locally produced NPR station (WHHY) program “Radio Times,” (http://www.whyy.org/91FM/radiotimes.html) with Marty Moss-Coane. She was talking about the English-only movement and the bills that have been passed in the Senate recently and she interviewed Joey Vento, the owner of the well-known Philly cheese steak restaurant Geno’s Steaks, who put a sign in his store saying “This Is AMERICA. Please WHEN ORDERING SPEAK ENGLISH.” Mr. Vento’s argument is that “we should encourage immigrants to speak English because that’s the path to the American Dream.” As a grandchild of Italian immigrants, Joey Vento argues that most immigrants cannot succeed unless that he belongs to two countries. My first reaction to what Mr. Vento said was – wait a minute, if the United States and other countries allow people to maintain dual citizenship, then these people certainly have the right to keep their language and culture and still be fully American. Then I thought some more. Could my family be criticized because we are raising our American and Brazilian sons to speak Portuguese first?

Speaking a foreign language in the home seems to be no issue to most Hispanic families in this country. They just do it naturally, and all the children of Spanish speaking parents I know speak Spanish fluently. Consequently, the prevalence of the Spanish language in this ever-growing immigrant ethnic group scares many American citizens and policy makers who not only want to make immigration more difficult, but also seek for legal ways to ensure English’s position as the official language of the country. In the aforementioned New York Times article, the people in Maine who were forced to stop speaking French in school and who decided not to raise their children as French speakers feel sad about their decision now. Many of them are making great efforts to re-learn it themselves and to send their children to French speaking schools so they can rescue their language and cultural heritage. Fortunately, it seems to be working and, in the case of Maine, it does help that the state – who once shunned the French immigrants – now celebrates and supports them. It is still the case, though, that many families of working class immigrants simply do not have the energy or resources to ensure that their children learn the parents’ languages and cultures -my next door Indian and Bangladeshi neighbors, whose boys only speak English, come to my mind at this point.

Another issue that saddens me tremendously is the dismantling of the bilingual education programs in states like Massachusetts where my brother-in-law used to teach math and science in Portuguese to Brazilian elementary school students and in English to ESL students from other countries. He was referred to the job by another friend of ours who for several years taught first grade entirely in Portuguese to a class-full of Brazilian immigrant children, many of them born in the United States. People like Mr. Vento argue that government-sponsored programs catering to immigrant populations providing information and education in their languages only hinder their command of English. In his opinion, which is probably shared by many people, when these “crutches” are taken away, the immigrants are forced to learn English and have more chances to succeed. This kind of reasoning has ultimately led to the phasing out of bilingual education programs in states such as Massachusetts and California and threats to eliminate other programs that involve multilingual aid to immigrants.
I think it is very sad when the children of foreign immigrants are stripped of their languages and cultures and have to experience a hard time adapting to school. What about the older people who cannot receive adequate health care or legal assistance if there are no forms and printed material in their languages? Older people find it much harder to learn English and many just don’t. There was a heart-breaking story in the New York Times a few months ago about a Chinese man, an undocumented immigrant, who was so afraid to seek treatment for his illness that he sought Chinese healers and subsequently died.

Language and culture may not always constitute matters of life and death, but it is still a great loss when a child or grandchild of immigrants cannot speak his or her parents’ and grandparents’ language and fully enjoy their culture. It is remarkable to me and quite contradictory as well that these arguments about English-only and changes to educational policies that foster bilingualism/multilingualism come at a time when most everyone agrees that multilingualism is actually a key to success in today’s globalized world. As Ms. Moss-Coane emphasized in the Radio Times program I quoted above, it is important to acknowledge that there are more job opportunities for people who are fully bi- or multi-lingual in today’s economy. Therefore, it is quite useful when immigrant children remain fluent in their family’s language. On the one hand the United States finds itself pulled by the internationalization of industry and the global economy which require translators and multilingual personnel, but on the other hand the population at home seems to have become more and more protective of its language and culture. Perhaps this is just one more of the consequences of 9/11/2002. Those terrible events seem to have forever changed this country’s and probably the world’s cultural landscape.

In a way, I understand why English speakers and language “purists” would feel threatened by the “invasion” of foreign languages in this country and try to curb the evasion of the tax-payers’ dollars into government-sponsored programs that foster the maintenance of multilingualism, even though I would counter argue that most of these very immigrants (even the undocumented ones) do pay taxes as well. In next month’s column I am going to write about how I sometimes feel threatened as well by the English language, fearing that it will eventually overcome Portuguese in my sons’ lives. In that way I feel I can understand a little why an English speaker would feel threatened by a foreign language like mine. In my opinion, however, this threat is not a good reason to fight against the maintenance of these foreign languages – particularly in the lives of American-born children like my sons whom I fell have every right in the world to be Brazilian and speak Portuguese even though they were born here.

This is why it is wonderful to know that there are sites like this one dedicated to multilingualism and to helping families to remain or to become bi- or multi-lingual and cultural. I do not feel lonely anymore in my endeavor to bring up my sons bi-lingually and, why not, multilingually since we are exposed to other languages, such as Spanish, in our community. Thinking about these issues made me realize that there are compelling arguments in favor of multilingualism and multiculturalism, even though many people in this country may not be on our side at the moment. So, using yet another language that I am fortunate enough to have made the acquaintance of: Vive la différence!

Lilian is a monthly Multilingual Living columnist and would love to hear your stories and opinions about these issues. You can email her at: lilianpw@gmail.com

Lilian W. is a monthly contributing editor and columnist for the 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: http://mamaintranslation.blogspot.com.
BOOKS FOR PARENTS

Want to keep up-to-date on the field of childhood bilingualism? Or maybe you have been looking for German-language activities for your children?

Childhood Bilingualism: Research on Infancy through School Age
Editors: Peggy McCardle and Erika Hoff

Childhood Bilingualism is a collection of articles originally presented at a workshop in Washington DC in 2004. Contributors are a wide group of renowned international linguists and experts in the field of bilingualism and biliteracy development. The volume discusses a wide variety of topics such as bilingual speech processing in infants and adults, speech perception, language acquisition, the onset of word form recognition, social factors in bilingual development, literacy, and bilingualism at school. The main goal is to put into perspective the state of current research in the field, and to delineate a research agenda for the future. This book will be of interest to those seek to be up-to-date with latest developments in the science, and who appreciate reading an impressive survey of the field. *Childhood Bilingualism* is the 7th volume in the series Child Language & Child Development, published by Multilingual Matters Ltd and is available for purchase at http://www.multilingual-matters.com/.

Spiel mit Deutsch: Kinder als Sprachforscher und Entdecker
by Elke Montanari

Spiel mit Deutsch: Kinder als Sprachforscher und Entdecker contains a wide repertoire of ideas and activities which aim at fostering German language development of children. This book will be of interest to preschool, kindergarten, elementary school teachers, as well as playgroup leaders who seek playful ways of motivating children to speak correct German. Activities focus on all senses: telling and speaking, dancing and touching, eating and tasting, drawing and writing, seeing and hearing. The book provides coloring sheets, detailed lesson plans, game boards, short stories, play cards, and more! Even though most activities are geared towards a group setting, parents who seek material to improve their children’s German find some tips and ideas of use as well. The material and content presented is freely adaptable to any child, group or situation. The book will prove valuable not only to children who are native speakers, but also to speakers of German as a second language, as well as to multilingual children who have German as one of their languages. Recommendable for children ages 5 and up. The language is in German. Spiel mit Deutsch is published by Herder Verlag, Germany and can be found at Kindergarten Fachversand online: http://www.kindergarten-fachversand.de as well as at Amazon.de.

By Alice Lapuerta
When I began dating my Russian husband, I would get excited for him when I heard other Russian speakers. “Go talk to them” I would say. “I don’t know those people” he’d often reply. To me, the novelty of two Russian speakers in the same foreign locale seemed enough, but just because they speak the same language doesn’t mean they have anything to talk about. My husband is more than ‘a Russian’; he’s an individual with many aspects to his identity, some common to Russians others not. Now that we have a child, however, being Russian and having kids is sufficient to pique our interest.

Colleen’s search for community activities in her husband’s language and culture
We’re often on the lookout for ways to connect with Russian people, culture and language in the Seattle area. One Russian connection we enjoy is visiting the Deli of Europe in the nearby suburb of Bellevue, which we fondly call ‘the Russian store’. As we stock-up on favorite foods our daughter, Alina, gets to experience tastes and smells from my husband’s childhood, creating a connection and common experience across generations. Food becomes a means for getting excited about things Russian and way to create family memories and rituals. The owner, whom we fondly refer to as Totya Lyuba (Aunt Lyuba), speaks Russian with my husband, allowing Alina to hear two adults conversing in her second language. Totya Lyuba also speaks to Alina in Russian and gives her crackers and candy, ensuring Alina will continue to be enthused about visiting the Russian store.

We are lucky to live in a region with a large Russian community. According to the Census Bureau, of 1 ¾ million county residents, 11,000 speak Russian at home. Not only do we have four Russian food stores (that I know of) we have a Russian bookstore with quite a decent inventory (my husband found a Russian translation of Wind in the Willows there, for example). While the Seattle city library isn’t very strong in its Russian collection, our county library has a truly broad and deep selection of Russian books, music and videos as well as occasional Russian story times. Having access to these things as they occur to us (rather than having to make a list and place a mail order or wait for a trip to Moscow every few years) is an important way of keeping relevant and engaging Russian language materials in our lives.

Our latest effort to connect to Russian culture is starting a Russian playgroup. So far the response has been lukewarm, but we are hoping to build some momentum. I am guessing that Russian families with lots of relatives in town don’t feel the need to connect the way we do. We have noticed how much more motivated our daughter is to speak Russian when she’s around other Russian speaking children, and we hope the play group times will provide her an opportunity to use her Russian and to build friendships with Russian speaking kids. Such friendships can serve not only as opportunities to practice language skills; we hope they will also provide a community of common identity. This will become critical when she reaches the age where she begins to notice and care that most families only speak English at home.

The Russian Orthodox Church in Seattle is a center for Russian religious and cultural activity. While we are not members of the congregation, they have been welcoming to us, inviting us to children’s holiday events. We have attended their bazaars to eat home-cooked Russian food, meet people and buy crafts. They have a free half-day Saturday language school that our daughter will begin attending in the fall, which provides secular Russian language instruction. This will be critical for our daughter’s ability to read and write using the Cyrillic alphabet.

By all these means we hope to create connections to our family’s second culture so Alina will feel at home in Russian culture and will value it as an integral part of her identity. For residents of the greater Seattle area, the Bilingual/Bicultural Family Network is a wonderful resource for identifying similar means to connect with non-English/American groups and events.

Check them out at the playgroup and school links on the Bilingual/Bicultural Family Network website: www.biculturalfamily.org (check out the Seattle playgroups, childcare and school links).

Colleen Laing is a freelance writer living in Seattle. She has a 3-year-old bilingual daughter. Colleen is a monthly columnist for Multilingual Living Magazine where she writes about single-language parenting a bilingual child. She welcomes feedback and article ideas at colinael@oz.net
According to the US Census Bureau, over 20% of the US population is of “foreign stock” - that is, they are either foreign-born or have at least one parent who was born in another country. In 2000, 47 million people in the United States spoke a non-English language at home, an increase of over 45% in just one decade. The number of native-born Americans with close ties to another country is expected to grow even more over the next few decades.

While these demographic changes present many challenges for educators, they also offer terrific opportunities to teach children about our world. Rather than trying to “Americanize” the ethnic community, we should make efforts to better involve English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students and bilingual families in the classroom by encouraging them to share their language and culture.

The benefits of such involvement are two-fold. First, it would teach a respect for diversity and build an interest in foreign languages and cultures among all students. Second, it would drive participation and build self-esteem among ESL and bilingual students with diverse backgrounds. It will encourage them to value their culture and language. This cultural involvement will help all children thrive in our increasingly multiethnic and multilingual communities.

Following are several suggestions for teachers of young children on how to involve ESL and bilingual families in bringing diversity into the classroom. Parents can build on these ideas at home and in playgroups, or suggest them to their children’s teachers or daycare providers.
Celebrate international holidays or festivals. Let students or immigrant parents share with the class the meanings, traditions and unique foods related to the holidays they celebrate.

Read bilingual books out loud. Ask a bilingual or ESL student to read a book in his or her native language and then let another student read the same book in English. This involves the ESL student and helps support literacy development in both languages. It also exposes the native English speakers to the sounds and text of other languages. For classrooms with very young children, a bilingual teacher or parent can read the non-English version. If a native speaker is not available to read the foreign-language story, CDs or tapes of great stories are available in many languages.

Sing and listen to songs in other languages. Many young children, if encouraged, derive great pleasure from singing their favorite songs to friends.

Ask children to bring in stamps from other countries. Merylie Wade Houston, a founding member of the Early Childhood Diversity Network of Canada, suggests that children deposit envelopes from their family mail into a class mailbox. “After talking about the stamps and where they came from, you can use them to make simple cognitive games, such as lotto, bingo and memory cards.”

Display multicultural posters. Make the classroom inviting by displaying posters that have text in other languages, illustrations of multicultural children or scenes from other countries. By involving bilingual students and immigrant families in classrooms or daycare settings, we are demonstrating and teaching a respect for linguistic and cultural diversity. At the same time, we broaden the horizons of both native and non-native children.


Anneke Forzani is the President and Founder of Language Lizard, LLC, which offers award-winning bilingual children’s products in over 40 languages at www.LanguageLizard.com. Readers are invited to sign up for the company’s complimentary newsletter, which provides helpful information and product discounts for parents and teachers trying to raise bilingual and multicultural children.
Jack Lloyd and Etta Duncan and their children (oldest to youngest) Saybah, Jack Jr. and Ella.
Bringing a new baby home is one of the most exciting universal human experiences. For most parents, it is a time of celebration – when families and communities come together to honor and welcome the new child. Rituals and ceremonies that mark a child’s birth and survival are common worldwide. In the United States, baptism and male circumcision are two of the more familiar baby traditions, but there are many others that are less visible. These rituals not only celebrate and acknowledge the child, but can also serve as an important way for families to solidify their connection to community, heritage and culture.

“Rituals are evidence that one is authentic and belongs,” says Maria Root, Ph.D., a Seattle-based clinical psychologist and identity development expert. “They are about knowing where you come from.” For parents, birth rituals and ceremonies provide an immediate sense of connection as well as inclusion of the child into the clan, tribe or community, Root explains.

Although the baby isn’t yet fully aware, these rituals are important for them as well, she adds. Along with being the first introduction to who they are, they also serve as guideposts as they grow and develop their own sense of identity. Even if they drift away from or reject their heritage, their early experiences give them a place to return to if they so choose.

“Parents re-tell the stories of the rituals to the child as they get older, giving them a path back to connection,” Root says. “With these rituals, the parents give the child a road map home.”

This can be particularly important for parents who have recently come to the U.S. from other countries. As families integrate into American culture, traditions such as baby ceremonies can serve as an important anchor to their history.

ParentMap spoke with three local couples about their baby traditions and rituals, stemming from five different cultures.
Although Sivaraman Balachandran was only 7 years old when he came to the U.S. from India, he still remains very connected to his cultural and religious heritage. So when his first child, Maya, was born a year ago, he and his wife Jennifer decided they would give her a traditional Hindu welcome. “It was an important way for me to keep my traditions alive,” Sivaraman says.

In most Hindu communities, when a child is born the family has a naming ceremony, or Namkaran. Often held on the 11th day after birth, it is the first samskara, or sacrament, in a Hindu’s life, and a way to name and bless the child. Although the ceremony is common, there can be some differences in how it is performed. “Hinduism is a huge, complex religion with many variations in traditions, ceremonies and beliefs,” Sivaraman explains. His family is Tamil Brahmin Iyer, an Indian subgroup that is defined along ethnic and caste lines, so his daughter’s ceremony was based on those customs and practices.

On the day of the ceremony, Maya’s grandmothers and some of Sivaraman’s female cousins placed bangles and anklets on her hands and feet. “Traditionally, it would be my sisters, but in this case my cousins acted as the baby’s paternal aunts,” he says. His cousins chanted mantras, or sacred invocations, into Maya’s ear. Sivaraman and Jennifer then spoke her name into her right ear. “We say the name so that it registers in the baby’s brain and the parents’ voice pattern is also registered,” says Sivaraman’s father, V.J. Balachandran. Sivaraman and Jennifer then wrote her name in a plate of uncooked rice.

“If we would have been in India, the ceremony would have been about four hours long, and a priest would have been present,” Sivaraman says. “There would have also been a Homam, a fire that serves as a witness to most Hindu religious functions. It really wasn’t feasible for us to do the full ceremony, so we opted for a simplified version,” he explains.

They did, however, hold a more complex ceremony when Maya recently turned 1. Another important milestone in a young child’s life, the Ayush Homam, or first year fire, is a way to wish the child a long, healthy and prosperous life. A priest performed Maya’s ceremony at home, chanting mantras in Sanskrit and lighting the traditional fire, fueled by ghee (clarified butter). Maya wore a silk dress given to her by the paternal side of the family, and the house was filled with flowers, milk and rice.

“The one thing we didn’t do was shave Maya’s head,” Sivaraman says. Typically, both Indian boys and girls have their heads shaved and their ears pierced on their first birthday.

Sivaraman notes that Jennifer, who is American with a Lutheran religious background, has been very willing to incorporate her husband’s traditions into their budding family’s life. “I’m in a multicultural relationship, so we can’t do everything in a Hindu way,” Sivaraman adds. “I’m trying to keep my traditions alive while at the same time respecting her traditions.” The couple is already thinking about having Maya baptized. “What’s great is we have similar ideas about religion,” he says. “We both like the idea of exposing our kids to many religions and cultures.”
Halina Alex is only a year old, but she’s already being exposed to many cultures. With a Filipino mother and a Navajo and Caucasian father, both of whom are Catholic, she is being raised with a unique blend of traditions and beliefs.

Halina’s first ritual was one that is familiar to many Americans – baptism. “We wanted to make sure that she was baptized in the first six months of life, something that is very important in the Filipino community,” says her mother, Charisma, who came to the U.S. when she was 8 months old. “Over a hundred people came to her baptism.” In her community, Charisma explains, many families try to keep their babies in the house as much as possible before baptism, perhaps out of a fear that they aren’t yet fully protected.

Another common Filipino custom happens when a baby visits a relative for the first time. “Whoever owns the home gives the baby money,” Charisma says. “This is thought to bring the homeowner good luck. My baby got quite a bit of money that first year!”

Some Filipino beliefs about babies aren’t always obvious to outsiders. “In my culture, it’s not good to praise a baby because it is thought to bring ‘usog,’ or bad luck, to the child,” Charisma says. “It can be awkward when you are at a non-Filipino party and people start excitedly pointing out how cute the baby is.” There are a variety of ways in which Filipino parents ward off usog, including putting a dot of lipstick on the baby’s forehead to keep away evil forces.

According to Charisma, another common Filipino belief is that eating clams will increase the production of breast milk. “My mother was constantly making me clam soup when I was breastfeeding,” she says. “I have to say I got pretty sick of it after a while!”

During her first year, Halina was introduced to her Navajo heritage through her father’s family. “My mother-in-law brought her a cradleboard to help her sleep better,” Charisma says. “She used it for at least the first two or three months.” The Navajo have traditionally used cradleboards to keep babies comfortable and allow mothers to work and travel. Navajo mothers would swaddle their babies tightly in a blanket, then lace them securely onto onto the wood board, which could easily be leaned against a tree or hung from a saddle. Many Navajo babies are still placed in cradleboards, as it is thought that the security of the board produces a calm personality, as well as a strong, straight back.

As Halina grows, her parents will continue to expose her to their rich and varied cultural traditions. Charisma doesn’t foresee any problems with integrating the customs of both sides of the family. “My husband respects a lot of the things that we are doing, and I respect what his family wants to do,” she says. “And it helps to have the common ground of being Catholic.”
When Jack Lloyd was in the hospital a few months ago with his laboring wife, Etta Duncan, it was a completely new experience for him— even though the couple already has a 15-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son. “At home in Liberia, no men are allowed around the woman until the child is born,” he explains. “This time I was there and it was hard. I saw all of the pain for the first time.”

Almost everything is new for Jack and his family these days. Forced to flee the war in Liberia, they came to the Seattle area almost two years ago. This major move has meant that some of their cultural traditions are starting to fall by the wayside as they integrate into American culture. “We are not really able to do as many traditional things here,” he says. “We are going with the American way of life.”

Although the experience with their newest child, Ella, has been primarily an American one, Jack remembers well the traditional ways in which his people, the Bassa tribe, welcome and care for new children. There are 16 different tribes in Liberia, and “they all have different customs and beliefs about babies,” he says. “It is also different depending on whether you live in the city or in a more rural area. In the city you have more of a Western influence.”

Bassa parents typically keep a newborn inside the house for two weeks, although visitors are allowed. Jack explains that this is to protect the child. “When you do bring them out, they are open to the community,” he says. “Everyone knows the day that the child will be brought out and there is a big celebration to welcome the child. People bring money, dry meat and lots of palm oil.”

Early on, parents tie a rope with beads around the newborn’s waist. This is a way to measure the growth and progress of the child in the first weeks and months. “When the rope gets tight, then you know that the baby is gaining weight and is fine,” says Jack.

Another custom is to put cayenne pepper in the newborn’s nose. A member of the immediate family, usually not the mother, first does this when the child is 2 or 3 days old. This is repeated maybe four or five times as the baby gets older. It is considered a way to initiate the baby into the rigors of living.

“This is important,” Jack says. “People will come and ask you right away— ‘Did you pepper the baby?’ The belief is that the pepper will make the child courageous and strong, and will help them withstand life and not be sickly.” Liberians frequently use cayenne pepper to treat colds and other minor ailments, he adds. Jack is particularly proud that in Liberia, it is common for men to help women with daily chores and tasks, something that is not necessarily true of all African cultures. Liberian husbands and fathers will often assist with cooking, feeding the baby and cleaning cloth diapers. “We’ll even help with laundry, whatever we can do,” he says. “If a woman has a child, you have to help her so she can be happy!”

Although the couple is currently drifting away from some cultural traditions, Jack predicts there may be a return to Liberian customs fairly soon. “My mother-in-law is supposed to come,” he explains. “Then everything is going to change, I tell you!”

Jack Lloyd and Baby Ella 
Liberian
Looking for books in YOUR LANGUAGE? 
Tired of translating ON THE FLY? 
IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO GO DUAL!

**Three Billy Goats Gruff**
This is a wonderfully illustrated version of the classic and well-loved folk story of how the Three Billy Goats Gruff try to cross the bridge and outwit the mean and angry Troll. Richard Johnson was awarded a Silver Medal in the “Best of British Illustration” for his artwork. The dual-language book is available from www.LanguageLizard.com in English with your choice of the following languages: Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Czech, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Italian, Panjabi, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish or Urdu. Best for ages 3-8 or early-mid level language learners.

**That’s My Mum**
Mia, a child of mixed heritage, doesn’t look like her mother and when she goes out, other people are confused. Find out how she and her friend Kai overcome being judged by the color of their skin. Its simple text and beautiful illustrations make it a wonderful tool for building self-esteem and discussing issues of race with young children. This book won “Best New Picture Book” by Child Education (Scholastic Ltd.) in 2002. It is available from www.LanguageLizard.com in English with your choice of the following languages: Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Czech, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Italian, Panjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese or Yoruba. Best for ages 3-8 or early-mid level language learners.

**The Giant Turnip**
In this humorous retelling of the classic Russian tale, the children have grown an enormous turnip, but how can they pull it out? The children in Miss Honeywood’s class, who represent many different ethnicities, discover that when they all work together, there is no stopping them! This bilingual book is part of the World Folk Tales and Fables collection available at www.LanguageLizard.com. It is available in English with a choice of Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Czech, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Italian, Panjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu or Yoruba and is best for ages 2-8 or early-mid level language learners.
GET MOTIVATED!

Feeling frustrated? Don’t give up! Reassess, recharge and get motivated again! By Corey Heller
Making the choice to raise your children multilingually can feel like a daunting task in itself, let alone the actual process of doing it! First come the questions that need answering: Who will speak which language and when? What will we say to extended family who are less than supportive? And then comes the daily process of putting our plans into action.

For some of us this comes easily but sooner or later we are bound to hit a few bumps in the road and need to give ourselves the time and space to reassess our choices and recharge.

PARENT TIME
No one said that parenting multilingual children would be fun all of the time. In fact, some days are downright frustrating and exasperating. After our tireless effort to provide our children with an environment full of language stimulation, they still don’t want to speak it! It is all we can do to just throw in the towel and call it quits.

Before you do this, start by taking some alone time for yourself when someone can watch the children. It is possible that you have reached a level of exhaustion and just need to take some time out for yourself. Don’t feel bad about having your limits. In fact, knowing what your limits are will help you ask for what you need before you reach them.

A common reason families become frustrated (and sometimes even quit) in their process of raising multilingual children is because they lack a plan. Without a plan we are leaving our children’s language and cultural development up to chance. Do you and your spouse have a plan for how you are raising your children multilingually? If your answer is no, then find the time to sit with your spouse and come up with one. It is important to make sure you are both on the same track so that you are working together toward a common goal. Discussing each parent’s expectations can be very enlightening as well.

Even if you do have a plan in place, you should make sure to reevaluate it from time to time. This will give each of you the chance to point out areas that aren’t working and to validate the areas which are. Families are always undergoing changes, especially as children grow older and mature, so it is always a good idea to allow your plan to grow along with your family’s needs.

Most importantly, try not to let yourself worry. Due to the misconceptions and lack of community support for raising multilingual children, it is essential that we not allow ourselves to worry too much about whether we are doing things correctly or not. The joy and fun of raising multilingual children should take center stage.

CHILD TIME
Children need to be encouraged to use their language through a variety of means. If they feel that using one or the other of their languages is simply a waste of time, embarrassing or a chore, parents and children alike will have a more difficult time keeping the language alive. Before long it will feel like an uphill battle for parents and children will most likely become resentful.

How do we know if we are helping or hindering the situation with our children? It is difficult to know exactly but watching how your children react can be a good indicator. For example, if your children tune you out only when you speak with them in your language, or if they become frustrated and angry when you use your language, then you probably need to find new ways to motivate your children toward using your language.

The easiest way to get your children interested in your language is to show them how much YOU like your language and culture for their own sakes. You need to use your language as much as possible when your children are around: speaking, watching television programs or DVDs, reading books and communicating with friends and family both in your city as well as back home.

Next, start adding fun activities to the mix. Most games can be altered a bit to include some language use and others can be created from scratch with the language in mind (visit www.biculturalfamily.org Once A Day Tip and Activity for ideas). No matter what you do to keep yourself and your children motivated, try your best to keep a healthy perspective on the whole situation. Have fun! If you find that everything is becoming a chore, stop what you are doing and just have a fun, crazy or relaxing day where everyone can recharge.

Motivation Tips

- Keep a language journal. Keep track of your children’s language progress as well as your thoughts on the matter
- Meet with other families. They don’t have to speak the same languages! Just meet with other families who understand what you are going through and can provide support
- Start or join a playgroup. Find or start a playgroup that matches your expectations for parent and child support
- Let yourself vent. Whether it is with your husband or one of your friends, take time to let off steam with people who understand
- Take time for yourself. Spending time away from the family to do something that delights you is not only good for you, it is important for retaining a healthy household.
- Spend time alone with the kids. If you are away from the family working much of the week, then make sure to spend time with the kids alone without your spouse so that you can form your own bonds with your children.
- Come up with a plan. Don’t expect that everything is your responsibility. Come up with a plan with your spouse and do it together! Give each other encouragement and have fun!
- For more tips and ideas visit: www.biculturalfamily.org
Much happens in the space of time between two months, two visits, one in March, when I was with my family for my first-born granddaughter’s first birthday party, and the most recent visit, in May, when I was also lucky enough to be with my family again, for second-born grandson’s third birthday. During that two-month space of time, between March and May, my granddaughter has gone from taking her first, very tentative, look-mom-no-hands kinds of steps, yet still crawling most of the time, to, in May, not only walking most of the time, but almost running, sometimes passing her two older brothers, upright all the way, through the whole length of her house. In that same space of time, in a state of wide-eyed amazement, two brothers watched a few helium birthday balloons disappear, up, up and away, into endless Seattle skyways. They also saw their first kite soar high above us, at the end of a taut string. As it glided, danced and swayed, gracefully, against the wind and against the gray-cloud background, the brothers each took turns holding the long, thin, gravity-defying string. Each brother felt the kite strain to fly away with the wind’s
current, as the string tugged on his own hand and arm, and the upward pull of the wind filled, puffed and pulled the kite’s billowed, sail-like wings.

During the same May visit, after our whole family enjoyed our kite-flying outing, the two brothers also played their first marble game with Grammy and Uncle, each one taking turns, shooting a single marble at dozens of other marbles that were placed inside a circle made of string on the living-room rug. Upon reflection, while thinking about these childhood games, I couldn’t help but think that, someday, many years from now, they’ll be learning concepts and terms that will describe what they were watching, as they each took turns flying the kite, or aiming at and hitting marbles that shot outward from the inside to the outside of a string-enclosed circle: interactions between inertia and motion.

The grown-ups’ lives have also changed during this same two-month period of time: My son-in-law began considering the possibilities of a new teaching position; my daughter has upgraded this site from a simple webpage to magazine format and is full of new ideas for projects and ways to further her commitment to maintaining her bicultural-bilingual household. Though Corey’s brother, Uncle Thomas, and I “ONLY” make the long drive between Nevada City, California, and Seattle, Washington, about five or six times a year, (for birthdays and a few holidays) it sometimes seems as though our two households are frequently, happily, merging into one. – Two separate households connected by a certain, 700 plus mile “ribbon of highway,” known as I-5. Just yesterday, while cleaning this house I live in, I started looking for a little gray dustpan and whisk-broom, and realized, “how silly I am; that’s at Corey’s house, not here.” Similarly, during each visit, I mentally bring home a few new German words, ideas, traditions or practices.

Some things stay the same though. In a few days our earth’s great golden heat source will, right on schedule, be as far north as it can possibly be this year. Moving from the cusp between spring and summer, it will soon be summertime in both California and Washington. Our two households are already enjoying longer daylight hours, more time outside; children playing with hoses and sprinklers in the backyard; chalk-drawings and words (e.g., “wasser”) on the front walkway; flowers in the garden blooming; tricycle and wagon rides down neighborhood sidewalks; trips to the zoo and neighborhood parks; earth’s warmer, more fragrant breaths of air, sunshine and warm breezes on our faces.

In less than a month from now, after another 13 hour or so drive northward on that ribbon of highway, Uncle Thomas and Grammy will again be arriving in Seattle to celebrate another birthday with our family. The beginnings of another being will be remembered and celebrat-

ed, along with all the hopes and dreams that being brought into this world we share.

On July 4th we’ll celebrate the beginning of an idea together, an idea that took on a life of its own. The idea grew, developed and became codified in writing and made into a written declaration--a promise, accompanied by the intent to fulfill, actualize and protect its existence. The promise declares that each and every one of us, regardless of flaws, foibles, frailties, mistakes, religious preferences, political views, or other differences, has certain “unalienable rights;” that is, rights inherent within our individual existence, inherent by the mere fact of having been born into this world. Except for those original ones, who inhabited this land before we arrived, all of us, or our ancestors, came from foreign lands, many pursuing better protections for those “unalienable rights.” Though some may try to interfere with our progress toward fulfilling that promise, or even attempt to undermine and weaken the promise itself, most of us will continue to stand firmly behind its true meaning and worth. Most of us will continue, not only to realize it for ourselves, but also to do what we can to preserve, protect and share it with others who care to carry the ideals it represents into their own everyday lives.

Though a secular document, written in words unique to this country’s language and culture, the ideas of this promise also carry a spiritual tone, which is not exclusively European-American. Some original, native-American tribes and families also practiced many of its principles for generations, long before this document was written. And I’ve also read that, in many instances, members of those tribes were as true or truer in practice to those innate ideals as was any patriotic colonist. But this holiday celebrates the birth of a written document, one that anyone in the world can read for him or herself, and, thereby, judge how well, and which ways, we, as individuals and as a whole society, are living up to, and/or failing, those principles and our attempts to one day actualize and come closer to realizing the ideals it represents.

Hopefully, our grandchildren will also one day learn about and be committed to carrying on that dream, and, with good health, a good education, a bit of luck and good parenting, they may even be better prepared than we are now to non-violently protect this land of their birth; especially from the errors and tears of our leaders’ unbridled hubris, which can lead us all far astray from the mark, the pursuit of the ideal and the central theme of this culture’s best hopes. So, Happy Birthday America, and may we all help each other to remember and renew our highest, most noble, non-violent aims; our best hopes, ideals and commitments.

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.
After our marriage in 1970 we stayed in Austria for a while. Leo got a good job as an engineer in a small city at the center of Austria. The first years were pretty hard. We could only meet on weekends, as I did not give up my job at first. But in general life was the same as if I had married a “real” Austrian. My husband was very eager to adapt to the Austrian life style. There was only one thing which he missed a lot: Korean food.

Austrian food was too heavy and too tasteless for him. He missed the spices and his kimchi, a pickled cabbage with a lot of garlic and pepper. In Korea one cannot imagine a day without kimchi. So one day he made it himself. He took a big pot, cabbage and a tremendous amount of garlic and salt and a lot of peppers. After one or two days, when the kimchi starts to ferment, the result is usually a spicy, delicious pickle which, indeed, you would not want to miss - if it is prepared correctly! But his kimchi was something even more special: it was prepared by a student without any cooking experience and with Austrian spices, which are very different from Korean spices. The result was simply - well.... When he first opened the kimchi pot after two days of ripening, I almost fainted. An intense smell of fermented garlic streamed through the room. He had obviously added more garlic than cabbage! The kimchi smell somehow managed to fill your stomach even before you even tried it. The taste was even more exotic. It was like eating a spoonful of garlic with salt.

“I took more salt than usual, just to be safe, to preserve it better,” he said. At first I had enough of kimchi. After a lot of trial and error, we managed to prepare some really good kimchi and a miracle happened: I started to like it too!

One day, when Leo still was a student, he called me to tell me that something really terrible had happened. The most terrible thing had struck him since he came to Austria. Alarmed by his excited voice, I visited him. When he opened the door, he held an open tin can in his hands, his pale face expressed horror and disgust. I had seen that tin can often in his kitchen before and it contained delicious Gulash, which is an Austrian specialty. He bought it often because he claimed it came close to the taste of a Korean dish.

“I just read the label more closely,” he said with disgust.

“Why, is it cat food?” I asked.

“No, worse, much worse,” he said “It is horse meat!”

At that time there were a few horse-meat shops in Vienna. Horse meat was even considered healthy, but today you hardly can find any shop at all as no one eats horse meat anymore. It was Leo’s fate that there was one shop on the way home from his university, where he used to go to picked up a can, thinking it was Gulash...

In the year 1979, my big dream to go to Korea for a longer period of time became true. A miracle happened: Leo had to work for a project connected with his home country and was therefore sent over to Korea to lead a branch office. We were thrilled. I finally had the chance to learn more about his home country and to get to know his family. All the time I kept asking him to tell me something about Korea but he would not. “You have to see yourself,” he used to say. “If I tell you something, you will misunderstand it and get a different picture of what this country is really like”.

When I first went to Korea, I suddenly knew what he meant. Korea at that time was simply a different world. The scars of the Korean War had not healed yet, and the country was down economically. There was a lot left to build up and reconstruct, and even though I was shocked to see the miseries in that country, I was also glad to know that my husband was one of the per-
sons who could contribute toward helping reconstruct his home country.

For a European woman who was used to enjoying all kinds of comforts, life in a small Korean town in the countryside was a challenge. Initially it was the little things that I missed, especially the food, such as Viennese coffee, bread, ham. Gradually, I realized that one needs so little for living and my attitude towards life changed completely. I soon adapted to the exotic food, which I liked from the very beginning, started to learn the difficult Korean language, and started to take an interest in the culture.

So far I could manage well with this different life and even found it exciting, but there was one thing which hit me very hard: my husband’s behavior suddenly changed completely. Since he had to adapt to the tremendously stressful working life in Korea, he gradually transformed into a nervous, authoritative person. Work took up 90% of his time. Another factor was that as the eldest son in his family, it was his responsibility to care for his parents, sisters and brothers, in addition to his own family. This all must have been a great burden on him. Where was the relaxed, friendly guy I had married? There was but little time left for his own kids. And even less time for his wife.

Soon after our arrival in Korea I gave birth to our third child. My son and daughter, who were old enough to go to kindergarten by then, learned the language much faster than I, and sometimes they assisted me when we went shopping. My husband usually worked late into the night. Most of the time I was alone with the kids and had nobody to talk to. Since my Korean in-laws lived far away in another city, I felt depressed and suffered severely from the baby blues. I wanted to attend a language class so that every-day life could be made easier, but there was nothing of that kind nearby. It was the hardest time of my life.

After a few months I had enough of this depression. I hired a maid who helped me with the household and kids, and devoted more time to get acquainted with the Korean culture. Gradually I learned flower arrangement, oriental painting, temple painting and wood carving, where I specialized in making Korean masks. This creative endeavor helped me to not only to cope with my problems, but it was also a good way to get in contact with other Western women, who had similar interests. Gradually, my life changed for the better.

There were certain rules in social life which had to be kept strictly, and which became especially apparent whenever all of our Korean relatives met. As the wife of the first son I had a special place in the family and was expected to behave in a certain way appropriate for the first daughter-in-law. I had many duties towards my parents-in-law, but in a certain way I was also an authority, as my husband’s younger sisters and brothers looked up to me.

When there were big family meetings I often felt strange and insecure. There were language problems and I had to adapt to different ways of behavior. I tried hard, but I was a Western woman with Western habits, which, I am sure, sometimes evoked astonishment in the Korean family. For instance, it was considered very rude for young women to smoke or drink a glass of alcoholic beverage in the presence of older people, such as my parents-in-law. I absolutely dislike sweet drinks, and as a real Austrian, the best drink for me is beer, which is also the best thirst-quencher in a hot country with extremely high air humidity. So whenever my parents-in-law were present and I wanted to drink a glass of beer, I had to leave the room and drink it somewhere else. If the situation required it, I even drank it in the bathroom.

One day we were invited for dinner by some relatives. At that time I was a complete “beginner” with Korean food. At the end of the meal the lady of the house offered me something on a plate which I have never seen before. Some whitish thing sprinkled with brownish crumbs. “Eat”, she said, “it is made of lice”. My stomach almost turned, but I tried not to show it.

The lady took a pair of chop-sticks, took one of the chunks sprinkled with... fried lice? and held it to my mouth. My blood rose to the head and I squeezed the lips together.

Then I remembered my husband’s words: “When you are invited somewhere, it is very bad-mannered to refuse food.” I closed my eyes and reluctantly opened my mouth. I bit into it and noticed that it was one of the specialties made of.....

RICE! It was sprinkled with roasted sesame seeds and tasted soft, sweet and delicious! I realized that the lady simply had problems with the English pronunciation, as in the Korean alphabet there is only one letter for L and R, sometimes it is pronounced like “L”, sometimes like “R”.

I often found that many “Eastern” ways of behavior were opposite to the “Western” ways and could cause confusion on both sides. So, for example, when I was young I was told to look into the eyes of the older person who is talking with you. Looking down on the floor was considered bad-mannered. In Korea it was just the opposite! It is absolutely unthinkable to look into the eyes of an elderly person while talking with him!

“It is absolutely unthinkable to look into the eyes of an elderly person while talking with him!”
Or, when you pass on something to another person or receive something, in Europe it is acceptable to do so with just one hand to keep the other hand free for some other action or for shaking hands. Receiving something with both hands could be interpreted as an expression of greed. In Korea it is the contrary. It is unthinkable to receive something with only one hand and doing so is considered bad-mannered. These are just a few examples. I can imagine that I was looked on in Korea as a young girl who “does not even know the simplest rules of correct behavior”!

The language was another big problem. As there are several different forms of politeness or formality in the Korean language and you have to use a different form with different people, it was very difficult for me to learn Korean. When my parents-in-law talked to me, they used the informal form; yet when I addressed them, I had to use the formal form, which is completely different. So I could simply listen to what they were saying to me, but I could never use those same words when replying to them. Eventually, I had a chance to attend language classes at University. After a while I managed to be relatively fluent in Korean. The ability to speak the language helped me to build a bridge to other people in my environment. This made my life a lot easier. As the years passed, I felt more and more comfortable with life in Korea. Gradually, Korea became my second home-country.

In 1994 we returned from Korea and settled down in Austria, for good. Today, I am happy to know that there is a family on the other side of the world which consists of my “brothers” and “sisters”, and I know that I am welcome there at any time. When I go back to Korea for short visits, I feel like visiting my “other” home again.

Leo and I were married for 33 years. They were years of happiness, love and tears. I am now standing in front of my husband’s grave. Too sudden we have been separated by a treacherous disease. Memories resurface again and again. I know in my heart we will meet again one day. The first thing I will do is to dance a waltz with him!

If you were to ask me whether I would repeat this life again, I would definitely say “Yes”. Maybe there are some things I would do differently. Before we got married, my husband did not ask me whether I would like to marry him. He knew that I was eager to do so; but for long time I had not been courageous enough. So he simply said: “If you have enough courage, marry me”. Courage is the point. To make an international marriage a success, you need courage and the will to work hard on it. There are also times when you think that you do not understand each other, and the cultural differences seem to wear you out. But all is possible to overcome with a big portion of courage and good will.

If you were to ask me whether you should go for a marriage with a partner from a foreign culture I would recommend you to go for it! But be aware that you have become the center of attention. Do not give up easily when you are shaken by culture shock and difficulties. Give a good example and show to the world that international understanding and generosity are possible. Make your marriage a good one. Thus you have a chance to contribute to the peace of the world.
Websites Worth Visiting!

Websites on the World Wide Web for families interested in language, culture and more!

**Bilingual Families Connect**
Bilingual Families Connect now has their very own Discussion Forum! Make sure to check it out and join in: www.bilingualfamiliesconnect.com.

**Colorín Colorado**
Colorín Colorado is an amazing site with information for families everywhere! The target languages are English and Spanish but they have resources in many other languages as well. For example, check out their "Reading tips for parents of children in PreK-3, now available in 10 languages! www.colorincolorado.org, www.colorincolorado.org/tips/index.php.

**Mama Lisa**
Welcome to Mama Lisa’s World, home of the internet’s largest collection of children’s songs and nursery rhymes from around the world. Whatever the culture a child belongs to, whatever the flag he or she lives under, this is the place to find the lyrics to kids songs, in English and in the original languages! Some songs include MP3’s, RealAudio or Midi music. And don’t miss Mama Lisa’s blog! www.mamalisa.com/world/index.html, www.mamalisa.com/blog.

**The Modern Language Association Language Map**
The MLA Language Map is intended for use by students, teachers, and anyone interested in learning about the linguistic and cultural composition of the United States. The MLA Language Map uses data from the 2000 United States census to display the locations and numbers of speakers of thirty languages and three groups of less commonly spoken languages in the United States. www.mla.org/resources/map_main.

**Iguana Magazine**
IGUANA is the new entirely Spanish-language magazine geared towards kids aged 7 to 12. Each 32-page, full-color issue is loaded with everything children, parents, and educators want: short stories, biographies and interviews with prominent Latino personalities, puzzles, craft projects, kid-friendly recipes, science articles, humor, and more. www.nicagal.com/iguana/eng/index.html

**Interview with Jhumpa Lahiri**
Interview with Jhumpa Lahiri, 2000 Pulitzer Prize winner for her collection of short stories, “Interpreter of Maladies.” Using a variety of characters, Lahiri gives life in these stories to the feelings of alienation, loneliness, and hope that so often mark the immigrant experience. She was born in England in 1967 and raised in Rhode Island. Her parents were born and raised in India. “Interpreter of maladies” is her first book, and the title story also won an O. Henry award. www.pbs.org/newshour/gergen/jan-june00/lahiri_4-12.html.

**Bank Holidays of the Year**
Bank Holidays of the World - This site informs you of all the days when banks are closed due to religious or public events. Major events (elections, strikes, riots...) are also listed, as well as school holidays in many countries. www.jours-feries.com/statique/index_pays2.html.
BILINGUAL ACQUISITION

By Fred Genesee

Families around the world are raising bilingual children and living linguistically rich lives. Yet childhood bilingualism continues to be poorly understood. Why so many misconceptions and what can we learn from today’s research?

Language acquisition is an everyday and yet magical feat of childhood. Within three to five years, virtually all children become fully competent in at least one language. We accept this as totally normal. We seldom worry about whether or not it will happen even though it is the most complex accomplishment of early childhood. Even more remarkable are those children who simultaneously acquire proficiency in two, or more, languages during the preschool years. Within the same time frame as it takes monolingual children to learn one language, bilingual children learn two languages and become adept at using them in socially diverse and appropriate ways.

It is estimated that there may be as many children who grow up learning two languages as one. Despite this, childhood bilingualism is poorly understood by many and regarded with skepticism by others. Because of lack of familiarity with or knowledge about childhood bilingualism, parents, educators, and early childhood specialists may express doubts about childhood bilingualism and they may expect negative consequences.
to result from children learning two languages during the preschool years. Such concerns are especially common in communities where most children grow up monolingual and, as a result, adult members of the community come to vie monolingualism as normal and bilingualism as abnormal.

In recent years, researchers have been actively involved in studying bilingual acquisition and, although all the research evidence is not yet in, we now have a more detailed description of important aspects of bilingual development than previously. Bilingual acquisition is complex. In comparison with monolingual children who usually learn language from their parents, bilingual children may depend not only on parents but also on grandparents, playmates, or childcare and daycare workers to learn their languages. Bilingual children may learn their languages primarily in the home, like monolingual children, or in the daycare, or neighborhood. Bilingual children’s exposure to their languages can also differ greatly, as, for example, if the child is learning one language from a parent who works at home and the other from a parent who works outside the home. Their language exposure can fluctuate greatly over time, if, for example, the parent who is the primary source of one of the languages takes a job in another city and is only home on weekends.

Here are responses to some concerns that are commonly expressed by parents and child care professionals about bilingual acquisition in early childhood.

1. Learning two languages in childhood is difficult and can result in delays in language development. Children who have regular and rich exposure to both languages on a daily or weekly basis from parents and other caregivers exhibit the same milestones in language development and at roughly the same ages as monolingual children. It is important to remember that there are large individual differences in language acquisition -- some children acquire their first words or use complex utterances much earlier than other children. Delay in the emergence of these milestones does not necessarily mean that there is something seriously wrong; in most cases it simply means that the child has taken longer to reach this stage. The same kinds of differences are characteristic of bilingual children.

It is important that parents of bilingual children provide systematic exposure to both languages all the time and that they avoid radical changes to the language environment of the child. Such changes can disrupt language development and create difficulties for the child.

2. Bilingual children have less exposure to each of their languages than monolingual children. As a result, they never master either language fully and, compared to monolingual children, they never become as proficient. Bilingual children can acquire the same proficiency in all aspects of their two languages over time as monolingual children even though they usually have less exposure to each language. Bilingual children acquire the same proficiency in the phonological and grammatical aspects of their two languages as monolingual children do in their one language, provided they are given regular and substantial exposure to each. Bilingual children may have somewhat different patterns of development in certain aspects of language in the short term. Vocabulary is one of those areas. Sometimes, young bilingual children know fewer words in one or both of their languages in comparison with monolingual children of the same age. This is probably because all young children have limited memory capacities, and bilingual children must store words from two languages, not just one. As well, because bilingual children learn words in each language from different people, they sometimes know certain words in one language but not in the other. When the vocabulary that bilingual children know in both languages is considered together, they generally know the same number of words and have the same range of vocabulary as their monolingual peers. Most importantly, when and if differences like these occur, they are short term and are likely to disappear by the time the children begin school.

Interpersonal communication is another area where bilingual children sometimes differ. The ways of communicating in certain social situations or of expressing certain meanings can be quite different in some languages. If bilingual children are acquiring such languages and they have not had full exposure to one or both of them, then they may not have acquired the ability to express these meanings or they may not be proficient in certain social situations. Given adequate and appropriate experience with their languages, most bilingual children quickly acquire all of the social language skills and ways of expressing themselves they need.

Generally speaking, bilingual children’s overall proficiency in each language reflects the amount of time they spend in each. Thus, a child who has just returned from a visit to a grandparent where only one of the languages was used, may prefer to use only that language for awhile and, thus, may appear to have lost some proficiency in the other language. This is usually a short term, temporary shift in preference that is corrected once the child is exposed to the neglected language. It is important not to overreact to these temporary fluctuations in proficiency since they are usually temporary.

Parents can best ensure that their children achieve full proficiency in both languages by providing rich experiences with each and especially with the language that might otherwise not get strong support in the extended community; for example, a minority language such as Spanish or Chinese in North America. It is important in this regard that parents who do not speak the majority language of the community continue to use their native language so that they expose their child to varied and rich ways of using language. This is difficult to do if parents use a language that they are not proficient in. It is
also important for parents to maintain use of heritage languages in the home because it is part of the family culture and an important part of the child’s developing identity. It helps them feel unique and connected to their families.

3. Young bilingual children can’t keep their languages separate; they use both at the same time; they are obviously confused. At some stage, most bilingual children use sounds and words from both languages in the same utterances or conversations even though the people talking with them are using only one language. Some parents and early childhood educators are concerned when they hear this because they believe that it means that the child is confused and cannot separate the two languages. Research shows that this is not true. The main reason for children mixing their languages in these ways is because they lack sufficient vocabulary in one or both languages to express themselves entirely in each language. Thus, they borrow from the other language. Indeed, this is an effective communication strategy in most families because parents and other adults who care for bilingual children usually understand both languages and may mix the languages themselves when talking with the child.

Bilingual adults in some communities mix their languages extensively. Research has shown that the most proficient bilinguals mix the most and in the most sophisticated ways without violating the rules of either language. It is normal for children growing up in these communities to mix their languages extensively because they are simply learning the patterns of communication that are common in their community.

In any case, mixing languages is a natural and normal aspect of early bilingual acquisition, even among proficient adult bilinguals. Parents should not try to stop their children from mixing. Bilingual children will naturally stop doing it, unless of course mixing is a frequent form of language use in the community.

4. Using both languages in the same sentence or conversation is bad. Parents can discourage and even prevent their children from doing this by making sure that each of them uses one and only one language with their child at all times. The same goes for other adults who interact with the child.

Research has shown that most bilingual children mix their languages sometimes no matter how much their parents mix, for the reasons mentioned earlier. As well, most parents mix their languages when talking with their young children because it is a natural and effective way of communicating with one another and their children. Because mixing languages is common among people who are bilingual, it can be difficult and unnatural, if not impossible, to keep the languages completely separate. If most people in the children’s wider community use only one language, then there is probably no reason to worry about how much parents or children mix; the children will eventual learn the monolingual patterns.

5. What are the most important things for parents or early childhood educators to know about early childhood bilingualism? There are number of important things to keep in mind:

♦ Bilingual acquisition is a common and normal childhood experience.
♦ All children are capable of learning two languages in childhood.
♦ Knowing the language of one’s parents is an important and essential component of children’s cultural identity and sense of belonging.
♦ Bilingual acquisition is facilitated if children have sustained, rich, and varied experiences in both languages.
♦ Proficiency in both languages is more likely if children have sustained exposure in the home to the language that is used less extensively in the community; the language that is used more widely will get support outside the home.
♦ Parents can facilitate bilingual proficiency by using the language they know best and by using it in varied and extensive ways.

Fred Genesee is a Professor of Psychology at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec. He has conducted extensive research on alternative forms of bilingual education for majority and minority language students, including immersion programs. He is also directing a large scale study of children who grow up bilingual. He has taught courses on bilingualism and bilingual education in Canada, USA, Japan, Spain, Czechoslovakia, and Australia. He authored several books on bilingualism, including Learning Through Two Languages: Studies of Immersion and Bilingual Education (Heinle & Heinle, 1987) and Educating Second Language Children (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

My name is Juliet. I am a stay-at-home mom with a wonderful, handsome husband and the cutest son I could ever hope for. We’re a family like any other. But there is one thing about us that really makes people stand up and take notice: My husband, Dave, is Chinese, and I am caucasian.

I met Dave online in early 2002. The internet really is a wonderful thing sometimes! After a few days of e-mailing and instant messaging, we had our first phone conversation. That conversation lasted two hours, and I remember going to bed immediately afterwards feeling very excited and happy. Even then, I knew that Dave was the one. By late summer we were married, and in March 2003, William was born.

I’ve always found Asian men more attractive, and I never thought of it as all that odd. But I can remember very specific instances when people would ask me “why are you interested Asian men?” I found it a bit rude that they would ask me this, but their curiosity was sincere. And I think I have some idea what it’s all about.

Like it or not, we are influenced by the media. And American media is notorious for being less than flattering in its portrayals of Asian men. Actors like John Cho and Daniel Dae Kim are starting to change the image of the Asian man for the better, but it is slow going. Many people still see an Asian male and think “nerd,” “brain,” “awkward around women,” etc. There is one more stereotype that I refuse to discuss here, as it is unfair and untrue. At least in my experience.

The thing is, for me, the American media never really played a part in shaping my opinion of things. I have always enjoyed Chinese films, and Japanese and Korean pop music. The sex symbols I was seeing were Asian. The “ideal male,” in my eyes, was Asian. That is the only real explanation I can think of.

For more discussion, please check out my AM/WF website: www.geocities.com/amwfstories/. If you have a love story you want me to include on the site, it will be added with pleasure.
“It was the band! The speckled band!!!” my mother read with dramatic intonation. My brothers and I huddled against her. I didn’t understand a word she said, but fidgeted around with excitement nevertheless. “Was ist das, ‘speckled band’?” we interrupted immediately.


My mom closed the book. “Enough for tonight! Tomorrow we’ll read the next chapter.” We went to bed, protesting.

This is how I learned English: through schooling and my mother’s late-night readings of Conan Doyle. I had my first English class in 4th grade but was disinterested and lost. Maybe this is what prompted my mother to give us these Sherlock Holmes extra-help sessions at home.

Our English teacher was one of a kind. She rapped her ruler on her desk and growled fiercely: “If I hear another one of you pronounce the word “but” as “buhtt” instead of “baht,” then something terrible will happen!”

My turn to read out loud: “Ann went to School. Buhtt... “ Oh no. I waited apprehensively for the terrible thing to happen, but I was saved by the bell. Literally.

I decided that I didn’t like English class very much. At home, however, it was a different matter altogether. There my mother enticed us with The Speckled Band and The Hound of Baskervilles. This is where I learned how to correctly pronounce “but.” I also learned other beautiful English words such as “the speckled band,” “dark and sinister business,” “investigating a case,” and “looking at it with a convex lens”. This was a lot more interesting than learning about Ann and Pat going to school. Ultimately, who cares about those dull kids when you have Sherlock teach you English instead?

Unfortunately, my English teacher insisted that Ann and
Pat were more important than Sherlock. So I kept bringing home 4s (Ds) in English. This continued for a while; then my parents, wisely realizing that this had nothing to do with my inability to learn English but more with poor pedagogy, sent me into an English-speaking school.

This school was very tough, but I enjoyed it more than my previous German school. What I found encouraging was that no one really cared whether I said “buhlt” or “baht.” Instead, they tried to encourage me to do Math, History and Science in English. After about half a year, I suddenly found myself communicating more and more with my peers, in English! My grades changed. I started bringing home As in English!

At one point I must have fallen in love with English. As a teenager, English became so important to me that I started to speak English not only with my German-speaking friends, but also with my brothers. It became my adopted mother tongue! Because of my English schooling, I actually have an easier time writing and speaking in English than in German, which is technically my “native” or “first” language.

I had to admit that I avoid writing in German, claiming that this is because German is an unwieldy, complicated language. In German, it takes a whole paragraph to express a simple idea, which in English you can express in a short, simple sentence. With the new German Rechtschreibreform, the spelling reform, how the heck is one supposed to know how to spell correctly these days, anyway?

It is not that my German is that bad. It just feels a little awkward. I cannot seem to shake out the sentences with the same kind of ease as with English.

Speaking is a different issue altogether. When I speak German, English words insist on coming out. When I speak English, German words are on the tip of my tongue. They say that this is a very typical phenomenon of bilinguals but sometimes this really frustrates me, especially when looks from others indicate that they think I am trying to show off with my code-mixing.

Why can’t it be acceptable to speak both languages at the same time? For wenn es nach mir ginge, then everyone in this world would speak in whatever way they liked, even if it’s a totaler mischmasch, ohne dass man translaten oder seine Sprache dauernd rechtfertigen muss.*

“But Holmes, this is so dreadfully confounding!”

“It’s elementary, dear Watson. Elementary!”

*English translation for the above sentence: “For if I had any say in the matter, then everyone in this world would speak in whatever way they liked, even if it’s completely mixed-up, without having to constantly translate or justify one’s language.”

Alice Lapuerta is the Managing Editor of Multilingual Living Magazine as well as a monthly columnist. She grew up in a trilingual household of German, Korean and English and now, together with her husband, is raising her daughter and son trilingually in German, Spanish and English. Check out her Multilingual Melange column each month. Learn more about Alice at her blog: http://www.stitchdiaries.blogspot.com.
M: Greetings Socrates. I am delighted that you have been able to join me this evening.

S: Thank you, Monoglossos. It is my honor to have been invited as a guest to your home. I have been eager for some time to have the opportunity to meet you and to discuss your views on language and culture.

M: Please, come be seated and we can engage in our discussion. [They are seated]. As I have heard, you are displeased with my proclamation that children, and people in general, should only learn one language, the language of their homeland, and refrain from learning additional languages.

S: Yes, Monoglossos, this is true.

M: Then I shall share my reasoning with you. Firstly, from the observations that I, and other knowledgeable men, have made, it is clear that humans have a limited capacity for learning and remembering things. Once our minds are full, they can not take in more, so when we try to learn more, our minds must lose some of what they learned before. Think, for example, of a barrel. Once it is full, if you try to add more it simply overflows. The same is true for languages. By learning more than one language, we will always be at a disadvantage since we will never have learned one language fully. Secondly, we have no need for learning more than the language. We spend our days with people who speak the same language as ourselves so there is no need to learn more languages. We should focus on perfecting one language, the language spoken by the people where we live. Finally, Socrates, by learning another language, one would associate with another culture and therefore would become confused as to where he belongs. We must ensure our citizens are clear-thinking and that they retain loyalties to their own land and people so that each country will prosper and stay strong.

S: Ah, you have some very interesting arguments, Monoglossos. However, I have
a few questions that I would like to ask you to clarify my understanding.

M: Yes, Socrates, please ask me your questions.

S: So, Monoglossos, you say that the minds of humans are limited in their capacity for knowledge. Thus, our minds can only hold a certain number of words and once that limit has been reached, then some words must be removed to make room for new words. Is this correct?

M: Yes, Socrates, this is correct.

S: You believe that a mind is like a barrel. If you fill a barrel with water, it is full. Thus, if you attempt to add more, then it will only displace the water in the barrel and will overflow. Is this your view?

M: Yes, this is correct.

S: Would you also say that all things relating to humans have limited capacities?

M: Which things do you mean, Socrates?

S: For example, memories?

M: Yes, I do believe there is a limit to the number of memories we can have.

S: And what about physical limits?

M: Yes, there are certainly limits to what we can accomplish physically.

S: And feelings and emotions?

M: Yes, there are limits to our feelings and emotions.

S: Would you say that a parent who has a child gives all of his or her love to that child?

M: Yes, all of it.

S: What then happens when a parent has two, or more, children? Is the love split between each of the children?

M: No, it would not split. In the case of love for children, each child receives a full amount of love from the parent. The parent simply has twice the amount of love.

S: So each child receives a full amount of love and therefore, for two children there are two full amounts of love?

M: Yes, this is what I am saying.

S: When it comes to language, couldn’t the same reasoning also be applied? Could not we also say that a human has the capacity to learn two languages fully without losing ability in the other language?

M: Hmm, well, I guess it is possible based on your reasoning. However, even if this were true, I still maintain that there is no reason that a person would need or want to learn another language.

S: Why are you concerned that humans should learn not learn more than one language?

M: I see no good reason why our children should learn another language thank their community language.

S: Is it not possible that a child might grow up and travel to other places in the world? How, then, will this person communicate with others in the world? Learning a new language as an adult can be very difficult, so would it not be best for our children to train themselves early in the art of languages?

M: Yes, I suppose this might be true simply for the convenience and the pleasure of learning languages. But there still is no need.

S: What of the importers in our country? Is it not necessary that they be able to communicate with those from other countries? Shouldn’t they also know other languages so that they can negotiate good food for us at good prices?

M: Yes, I agree that would be a reason for those people to learn another language.

S: Is it not possible, then, that there are a multitude of other such reasons that we haven’t yet spoken of and each of them individually might be a good reason for learning another language?

M: Yes, this is possible.

S: You also stated that you believe that a child will end up being confused and will lose the loyalties to his country of origin if he were to learn another language and share in another culture?

M: Yes, this is a natural consequence.

S: Do you enjoy eating spices and grains that our importers bring us from other countries?

M: Oh yes, definitely.

S: And do you enjoy wearing clothing made out of cloth from weavers in other countries?

M: Yes, I am always looking through the new fabrics at the docks when the ships first arrive.

S: Do you also enjoy eating food and wearing clothing made in your own country?

M: Yes, of course.

S: So, you are able to eat food and wear clothing from both – our land and other lands - and you enjoy both?

M: Yes, this is exactly what I just said.

S: Then would you not agree that it is the same with cultures? That it is possible for a person to be able to appreciate two cultures equally?

M: Well, I suppose I might have to agree that it is similar based on your argument.

S: Could we then not agree that a person who grew up learning more than one language and participating in more than one culture is also able to be loyal to his homeland while also participating in another culture?

M: Yes, this too might be possible based on your reasoning.

S: In fact, Monoglotto, I would argue that it might even be possible that there are good reasons to learn more than one language and culture. Do you not agree?

M: This is a possibility, Socrates, I agree. I will need time to reflect upon your reasoning but I do believe you are on to something.

S: I look forward to future discussions on this subject, Monoglossos, after we each have had time to think more about it.

M: Thank you for coming here tonight, Socrates, it was a great honor and very enlightening.
Ages 0-2: Lullabies

Babies love to hear their parents singing to them. There is something about the closeness and attention from the parent(s) and the melody that always seems to captivate babies. Make sure to take time out to sing to your child.

Singing to your child is also a way to help establish language patterns and intonations for your child in an enjoyable, unique medium. The following comes from the PBS Parents site:*

“Singing is a form of play, especially if you sing songs with hand motions. Singing songs like The Wheels on the Bus or Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star is a way to help your baby learn the patterns and intonation of language. Rhyming songs help your baby hear small differences in sounds, a skill he will need when he learns to read. You will be singing solo for awhile, but your baby will begin to chime in with words or hand actions when he is ready.”

There are also claims that singing and talking can help establish better thinking and language skills later on.**

The difficulties we as parents in multilingual families face, however, is access to the songs of our childhood. We often lack family around who speak the same language and who can share with us the songs they sang when we were young. Our friends often don’t speak the same language either or if they do, they are as much at a loss as we are. We long to sing our childhood lullabies to our children but many of the words fail us and we can’t quite get the correct melody.

One solution for this is to search for resources on the internet. There are extensive repositories of lullabies, children’s songs and more right at your fingertips. Some web sites even include an audio file so that you can learn the tune.

An obvious solution is to purchase CDs that contain the lullabies that you are searching for. While back visiting your home country, make a point of purchasing a few CDs and bringing them back home to share with your child. If you aren’t heading over to your home country for a while, then find out where you can purchase some CDs; again, the internet is a wonderful resource for this.

However you can get access to songs and lullabies, it is worth it both from a language learning advantage for your children and an emotional bonding for you and your child.

Sources:  * http://www.pbs.org/parents/readinglanguage/baby/talking_milestone_baby.html
** http://www.hbci.com/~wenonah/new/babbrain.htm

Ages 3-5: Learning an Instrument

Learning to play an instrument is very much like learning a new language. There are rules to learn: from the way to hold the instrument to learning to read music. It also takes a great deal of discipline.

Studies have shown that learning to play an instrument has far-reaching effects:

“Music education, particularly learning to play an instrument, has been found to have many benefits on cognitive development. These benefits appear to be based on the long-understood principle of “transfer of learning”. That is, if one learning situation involves factors that are also used in a later, but different, learning situation, the knowledge or skills gained will facilitate the later learning.”

As with learning more than one language, learning to play an instrument develops and stimulates our brains in unique ways. There is also evidence that being exposed to music and learning an instrument, in particular, can aid in learning to read since it aids the child’s brain in picking up sounds and intonations. When a child begins reading, one of the early stages consists of “sounding out” words. It is this stage that music education appears to benefit.

Research hasn’t made any claims as to whether music education or learning an instrument will help your child learn their second language better or be more motivated. However, due to the studies on how it helps children familiarize themselves to sound and tones, it is very likely that it can help children with learning correct pronunciation and the unique intonations of their languages.

Of course, the question is which instrument to choose. The best approach is to take your child to a music store where they allow children to experiment, hands-on, with the different instruments. At the very least, you can purchase a small bongo drum for your child as well as small cymbals and perhaps a recorder or tin whistle. The main purpose is to get your child interested in the different sounds he or she can make with different instruments.

Ages 6-10: Dancing
At this age children are becoming more and more aware of the different kinds of music. They will hear the music you play on the radio when you are driving the car and then the difference between it and what your spouse enjoys listening to. This is a wonderful time to expose your child to different kinds of music and to discuss it in your language. Your child is coming to an age where he and she can understand the different cultural links to music as well so share with your child traditional music from your home country.

School-age children tend to have an overabundance of energy, so get them dancing to the different kinds of music. Take this opportunity to teach them some traditional dances from your home country and talk about what each of them means and what they mean to you based on your childhood associations with them.

Try to find pictures of your childhood when you participated in local festivals. Maybe you were wearing traditional clothing or played an instrument. Music can establish very emotional ties with language and culture so don’t miss out on this opportunity to share it with your children.

When visiting your home country with your children, make a special effort to bring them to festivals and events where traditional music is being played and dancing is being performed. Your children may not want to come with you to such festivals but bring them along anyway and explain to them what it was like for you as a child going to such festivals. Describe what the smells were like from the food cooking and what the weather was like. Talk about the memories you have when you were their age and they are bound to become more and more interested. Try to get them dancing once they feel comfortable.

Make sure your family shares their own memories of the music and dances of your home country. This is an essential part of who you are and by sharing your memories, you are helping to provide a link between your culture and that which you hope to provide for your children. You might feel embarrassed, especially if you have older children who tease you, but remember that bit by bit they will become more interested. If they don’t know anything about your past, they won’t know where to start when the become more interested.

Ages 11-18: Parent’s Music
It is hard to encourage a teenager, or soon to be teenager, that any other music than their own is interesting or worth learning about. However, give it a try.

In today’s modern world, more and more musicians are making “modern” music in their own language. See if you can dig around on the internet and ask around to see what you can find. Talk your children into seeing what they can find. Have fun with this project and share what you find with each other – sometimes it can be a great laugh.

Another fun way to share modern music with your children is to share with them the “modern” music of your childhood when you were their ages. There is nothing more fun than sharing what you thought was “cool” music back then with your teenagers.

Not only will these activities get your children involved in your childhood and give them a perspective on your life in another country, it will be a wonderful opportunity for parent-child bonding. Sharing such memories with your children, especially ones where all of you are laughing together about your tastes as a youth, will help instill in them the cross-cultural links between who you are and who they are.

It is very possible that your teenagers are going through levels of ambivalence now and then about who they are and where they fit into the whole scheme of things. By sharing bits of your past you are showing them that you too were like them, despite the fact that you grew up in a different country with a different culture.

Your children probably waver between enjoying being unique from their monolingual friends and wanting to fit in more. One aspect of our job as parents is to remind them that “fitting in” is relative and that we all go through it, even if we didn’t grow up in a multilingual household! After all, we are only human.
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European Muslims share experiences  
By Alix Kroeger  
BBC European Union reporter  
June 28, 2006  
“A conference on tackling extremism in Muslim communities has been hearing the experiences and views of Muslims from the UK and across Europe.” European Muslims come together for a conference to share their thoughts on what it means to be a Muslim in Europe and living with more than one identity. With tensions still palpable around the world, conferences are offering the opportunity for people to come together in joint communion. Read the BBC article here: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5124356.stm.

Botswana: Linguistic Foibles of a President-in-Waiting  
Mmegi/The Reporter  (Gaborone)  
ANALYSIS  
June 30, 2006  
Posted to the web July 1, 2006  
Tshireletso Motlogelwa  
What to do when a vice-president can’t speak the indigenous language of the country he presides over? Botswana is dealing with just such a situation and the populace is watching with interest. It is fairly certain that Ian Khama will become the next president of Botswana yet his linguistic abilities in the native language, Setswana, are clearly lacking. Questions of cultural longevity are being raised, as Setswana loses favor with each generation. Language expert Kgomotso Mogapi pointed out with reference to a previous president, “Masire used to speak Setswana well. The fact that he spoke the language so well meant that he had the ability to relate with an ordinary Motswana’s point of view.” Read the full article here: http://www.mmegi.bw/2006/June/Friday30/7033895581269.html.

Colorful proverbs capture a peculiar sensibility  
By ROGER PULVERS  
Special to The Japan Times  
Tuesday, June 27, 2006  
An article on the beauty of language through Japanese proverbs. “Every language has a vast number of proverbs, mottos and saws, and native speakers often quote them to express a feeling or to prove a point. The fact is that you can “prove” almost anything with a colorful turn of phrase as practically every proverb has an equal and opposite proverb. A person might well claim that “He who hesitates is lost,” while another could refute this with “Look before you leap.” This latter saying has a fine Japanese equivalent in ishibashi o tataite wataru (tap the stones of the bridge before you cross it).” Read the full article here: http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ek20060627a1.html.

The ‘curse’ of having a girl  
By Navdip Dhariwal  
BBC News, Delhi  
Thursday, June 29, 2006  
“India might be a country rushing headlong into 21st century but every year thousands of babies are aborted or killed at birth because they are girls.” Although India is quickly becoming the center of the technological world, traditions are hard to change. The correspondent of this piece is originally from India and is expecting a child. Read her full article here: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/5125810.stm.

NOTE: Some links may be out of date by the time you read this magazine. If so, do a search on the title in Google or your favorite search engine.
Some Final Words of Wisdom...

Let yourself be intrigued and inspired by these words from the wise!

“Culture and Language are inseparable”

- Ngugi wa Thiongo

Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiongo says culture and language are inseparable. “Language is a means of communication and a carrier of culture... Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we perceive ourselves and our place in the world... Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world,” he writes in his book Decolonising The Mind. Source: http://allafrica.com/stories/200607010148.html

“Few areas of linguistics are surrounded by as many misconceptions as is bilingualism” - F. Grosjean

“Few areas of linguistics are surrounded by as many misconceptions as is bilingualism. Most people think that bilingualism is a rare phenomenon found only in such countries as Canada, Switzerland and Belgium and that bilinguals have equal speaking and writing fluency in their languages, have accentless speech and can interpret and translate without any prior training. The reality is in fact quite different: bilingualism is present in practically every country of the world, in all classes of society and in all age groups; in fact, it has been estimated that half the world’s population is bilingual. As for bilinguals themselves, the majority acquired their languages at various times during their lives and are rarely equally fluent in them; many speak one of their languages less well than the other (and often with an accent) and many can only read or write one of the languages they speak. Furthermore, few bilinguals are proficient interpreters and translators.”


“Many parents often sacrifice the gift of a second or third language...” - Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa

“Bilingualism is usually a rewarding experience filled with social and academic gains. However, for some, the process can be a time of anxiety. Many parents often sacrifice the gift of a second or third language in order to spare their children the stress of the learning experience. It would be more advisable for families to gain a clear understanding of the factors they have an influence over and those factors which are in nature’s hands.”

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Find out what experts in the field of linguistics have to say about bilingualism.

Developed by a parent raising bilingual children, Bilingual Families Connect began as a survey of other bilingual families from various language and cultural backgrounds. Their stories were fascinating. Parents were so enthusiastic about sharing their insights and learning from one another that Bilingual Families Connect was created. ©2006