Multilingualism: The Art of Balancing Languages

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Key answers to keep you on your language track,
by Madalena Cruz-Ferreira

Immigration Issues: Lessons in Identity
Evaluating your identity through another culture,
by Dinka Souzek

What Research Says About Multilingualism
The experts have the research to support it,
by Colin Baker

Becoming Multilingual at School: Opportunities and Challenges
When school offers another language,
by Jasone Cenoz

An Interview with Vietnamese Photographer Mai Loc
A photographer whose life changed through language,
by Alice Driver

Red Bamboo Lane
When the sting of lost bilingualism still lingers,
by Rachel Scollon

Still Trilingual at Ten: Livia’s Multilingual Journey
The success story of a daughter who keeps the balance,
by Jean-Marc Dewaele

The Gift of Language, The Gift of Culture
The memories of a month in Mexico as a student,
by Kristin Reiber Harris

Making It Work With More Than Two!
Families around the world share their stories

Multilingualism Matters
An interview with Marjukka Grover,
by Corey Heller

OPOL+1
Top tips on how to live with three languages,
by Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert

Your Cultural Identity Changes As Your Child Grows
Allowing for mixing, blending and adjusting,
by Harriet Cannon

World Folktales and Fables: Effective Teaching Tools to Educate and Entertain Children
Using your favorite fables to educate your child,
by Anneke Forzani

Is Three a Crowd?
An Interview with Madalena Cruz-Ferreira,
by Alice Lapuerta

Cause for Concern? Bilingualism and Multiculturalism in Japan
What is the state of multilingualism in Japan?
By Damian Rivers

Tips for Parents of Second Graders
Fabulous tips from ¡Colorín Colorado!

Emergent Literacy - Writing
Short guide to what you need to know

Ages & Stages
✦ 0-2: Planning Ahead
✦ 3-5: Exposure
✦ 6-10: Peers
✦ 11-18: No Big Deal

Ask An Expert
✦ Language Support
✦ Too Many Languages?
✦ Talking Funny?

Keep Language Alive!
Activities for language fun
From the Editor’s Desk

Mailbag
Letters From You!

Top New Year Products
French, Spanish and English books, music, games and more!

Books For Parents
◆ Raising Bilingual Children
◆ The Care and Education of Young Bilinguals
◆ Heading South, Looking North
◆ Lost in Translation

Going Dual?
Top dual language products

Ču Vi Parolas Esperanton?
Your next lesson in Esperanto!

How We Met
Fred & Ingrid

Global Flavors
◆ A Taste from the Middle East
◆ Salva Family’s Zucchini Lunch

Websites Worth Visiting
Fun sites for multicultural families

Final Words of Wisdom
Words from the Wise...

Party Mix
The language influence a few cousins can have!
by Trisha Yonekura

Habla (Mostly) Español
When it isn’t as easy at it seems it should be,
by Carrie Ferguson Weir

Why
Finding answers through our toughest times,
by Irène Nam

Multicultural Melange
Wow, really, three languages?
By Alice Lapuerta

Tatie Teaches a Toddler
Who said only parents can raise children bilingually?
by Sarah Dodson-Knight

Equinox, Equality, Egalitarianism
Finding balance in the world of language and more,
by Sharon K. Cook-Gordon-Spellman

Using Two or More Language at Home
One family’s journey into multilingualism,
by Gerry MacDonald-Moran

Pack Him in Onions and Other Remedies
Cultural idiosyncracies gone wild!
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A wonderful Spanish-English DVD just for kids!
www.turtlesinties.com

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

Iguana
The Spanish-language magazine geared towards
kids aged 7 to 12, www.iguanamagazine.com
Dewaele writes about his daughter Livia’s trilingual journey and how that translates to everyday life. Jean-Marc Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert’s article on OPOL + 1 language with us what the newest research says about multilingualism. To support us in this endeavor, experts like Colin Baker share across: You are not alone out there!

When one juggles a lot of languages, one is confronted with a whole range of interesting problems and questions. How can one create a balance with 3 languages? How can one be consistent? How is it possible not to mix? How can one make sure that our communication. Other families practice OPOL and leave the third language to school or the environment. At any rate, we end up juggling three languages simultaneously, and we need to be dexterous jugglers indeed to keep all three balls in the air. Sometimes we need to bend all the way backward and still keep on juggling. Somehow we figure out how to do that, too.

For families like ours who are trying to juggle three or more languages nothing is straightforward, nothing easy, very little seems to be logical, and we just seem to always be the exception to the rule. Not even the term fits: Bilingual! I am a bit of a stickler about the correctness of terms, so I insist that we are either “trilingual” or “multilingual.” Then, from a mathematical perspective, 3 languages are just not easily dividable by two parents. You get 1.5 languages per party. How is that supposed to work out? That is the situation that you confront when both parents have two different native languages, yet use a third for communication. Other families practice OPOL and leave the third language to school or the environment. At any rate, we end up juggling three languages simultaneously, and we need to be dexterous jugglers indeed to keep all three balls in the air. Sometimes we need to bend all the way backward and still keep on juggling. Somehow we figure out how to do that, too.

When one juggles a lot of languages, one is confronted with a whole range of interesting problems and questions. How can one create a balance with 3 languages? How can one be consistent? How is it possible not to mix? How can one make sure that our children are equally exposed to all languages? Are our children destined to be speech delayed? Questions, questions, questions.

In this bimonthly issue, we hope to answer some of these questions, and to inspire, encourage, and to cheer from the sidelines. Ultimately, we hope to get the following message across: You are not alone out there!

To support us in this endeavor, experts like Colin Baker share with us what the newest research says about multilingualism. Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert’s article on OPOL + 1 language gives us an excellent overview of what, exactly, trilingualism involves, and how that translates to everyday life. Jean-Marc Dewaele writes about his daughter Livia’s trilingual journey and reassures us that “multilingualism from birth does not result in any retardation in linguistic or cognitive development.” We are particularly pleased to present two interviews in this issue. One with Madalena Cruz-Ferreira in which she speaks about her book Three is a Crowd and debunks some myths regarding trilingualism. And a second with the co-founder of Multilingual Matters, Marjukka Grover, who shares her experiences raising bilingual children. Jasone Cenoz writes about the opportunities and challenges of becoming multilingual at school, and Damian Rivers discusses the multilingual situation in Japan.

Who are these multilingual families that we are talking about? Where do they live, and what languages are they speaking? We present several family profiles to give a “face” to the term “multilingual family.” Thank you to Ute Braasch, Yvonne Ykusek, the Vogl-Hirchi family, and to Carrie Stamenov for sharing your stories and photos with us!

Before you turn away disappointedly, saying “oh, there’s nothing in there for us in this issue, it’s all on multilingualism” – no indeed! I urge you to check out the beautifully written columns by Carrie Weir, Geraldine MacDonald, Sharon Spellman, Trisha Yonekura and Irene Nam who share with us the ups and downs, challenges and rewards of raising bilingual children and grandchildren. Kristin Harris describes with vivid language how her stay Mexico as an exchange student changed her life. Onion pack or Topfenwickel? Pam Mandel’s tongue-in cheek article illustrates culture shock on the sick bed. Harriet Cannon reminds us to not forget our cultural ties and Anneke shares bilingual fairy tale tips.

From Australia to Austria: Ingrid Weilguny shares her story of how she met Fred by returning to her father’s village in Austria. Are you an immigrant? Then Dinka Souzek’s article “Identity By Perception” might resonate with you. Read Rachel Scollon’s article for a glimpse into her childhood and into the time that she spent in Taiwan, attending a Chinese school.

Follow us on a journey to Vietnam and read Alice Driver’s interview with Mai Loc on how he launched his successful career in photography. His wonderful photos have been exhibited at the Nordiclight Photo Festival in Kristiansund, Norway last year - all because he decided to learn English!

Lastly, we have an anniversary to celebrate! Our magazine is exactly a year old! Reminisce a bit with us and re-visit our very first February “newsletter,” as it was called at that time: www.biculturalfamily.org/newsletterfeb06.html. Haven’t we come a long way?

Corey once asked me in an email: “Do you think anyone knows that the magazine is put together by two exhausted, insane moms?” I had to grin. Indeed, putting a magazine together is
no easy task. We write, edit, layout and research while pots are boiling over on the stove and toddlers throw tantrums in the background. I have often told Corey that working with her on this magazine has actually kept me sane in all this insanity! And I would like our readers to know that we do this with as much enthusiasm as when we started out a year ago. We do it because we’re passionate about this topic. We do it because we couldn’t otherwise.

At this point, I want to say: Thank You, Corey. Thank you for starting this, for having called the magazine to life! And thank you to all you wonderful readers, writers and contributors who believe in this project and who have supported us along the way!

Happy Birthday
Multilingual Living Magazine!

Alice, Managing Editor
CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to Sarah of Alphabet Garten, a Multilingual Living Magazine sponsor, on the arrival of her healthy baby boy, Jack, born on January 27th, 2007!

You can read more from Sarah on her blog: alphabet-garten.blogspot.com

I would like to make you aware of Brio. Like you, Brio is all about fun while learning and connecting with your community. Brio is latest in parenting site dedicated to teaching tolerance through culture and language. We at Brio believe that education is a lifelong process. Through sharing insights and challenges we can make our children smarter, happier and healthier. Find out how parents are raising their kids all over the world and share in their memories and triumphs.

Check us out at www.brio.typepad.com

Thanks!
Dipu Patel-Junankar
Editor, Brio
www.brio.typepad.com
dipupatel@comcast.net

I would like to see our German Saturday school listed on your site. The school is a private non-profit, nondiscriminatory German language school that is for grades Pre-K through Adult. It meets Sat. mornings 9:00-12:00pm Sept through May in Watchung, NJ. Our website is www.german-school.org. We have been teaching German to bilingual and monolingual children and adults for 42 years.

Thank you,
Chris Melamed
School Secretary
www.german-school.org

Nicola,
Germany

I have just got round to subscribing - what are Christmas holidays for? - and am kicking myself that I didn't do so earlier. It's beautiful - and I mean that literally. Not only is it interesting and thoughtprovoking (have just printed a number of pages for my train journey) - but it is also a delight to behold, and I admire that a great deal as I am hopeless at visuals!

PHOTOS: © iStockphoto.com/bulent_ince & iStockphoto.com/fullvalue

Multilingual Living Magazine - March/April 2007
A CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

The Bilingual Soul is a compilation of essays exploring the duality of the bilingual/bicultural identity - the feeling of having a different personality, a different spirituality, and even a different soul in each language or culture.

The duality of the bilingual soul is an intensely personal and individual issue, but also one that universally affects all of us who move between two (or more) languages and cultures. In gathering your thoughts for your submission, you may want to draw on some of the following ideas for inspiration.

What was the linguistic and cultural mix in your home while you were growing up? What were the feelings, associations, etc. related to each language or culture?

At what point did you realize that you were bilingual/bicultural? What did that mean to you? What feelings did you have around this issue as a child? As a teenager? As a young adult?

What sorts of associations do you have in each language? Do you use language more with certain members of your family, your friends, at work, or in certain types of situations? Is this an automatic switch, or a conscious decision on your part?

Does each language have a different spirituality or a different personality -- in essence, a different soul -- for you? Do you think or act differently in one language than another?

What are some other issues, besides language, that contribute to your bilingual/bicultural identity -- food, music, traditions, etc.?

If you close your eyes and think about yourself in one language/culture or another, what is the first thing that comes to your mind? Is it an experience, a memory, an aroma, a specific person, a feeling?

Why do you think you experience this duality of soul between one language or culture and another?

How do you feel about yourself in each language?

What does having a bilingual/bicultural soul mean to you now?

Submissions for The Bilingual Soul may be of 1,000-10,000 words in length. The Bilingual Soul Anthology: www.bilingualsoul.com

Ruth Kunstadter
Montclair, NJ

Your magazine is amazing! I got lots of info on everything I need re trilingualism. I learned about your magazine from the multilingual munchkin mailing list. It's nice to know there are lots of parents who care about multilingual. Reading other parents' experiences keeps me motivated.

I have a blog on trilingualism and would like the link to be listed on your website: trilingual.livejournal.com.

Thank you,
Santi

I am thrilled to hear of Multilingual Living Magazine! My wife and I have lived in South Central Los Angeles for many years, by choice not by chance. We want to subscribe. And possibly contribute an article or two. We love multicultural urban life and planned to be a bilingual family (English and Spanish). Our first son was born to us, but it was a close thing: I almost lost both wife and son to placenta previa. So we adopted our next two children, one from Guatemala and one via LA County foster care. Now our family looks like it ought to be multilingual, too!

We did not have the help of a magazine like yours this whole time, and have been feeling our way along by trial and error. Mostly error! But perhaps your readers could profit from some of our experiences. I am sure WE will profit from your magazine too! If my wife hasn't signed us up yet, I will subscribe myself. I haven't even visited your website yet, I was so excited I had to email you right away.

Looking forward to my first issue,
Nicolas,
Los Angeles, CA, USA

Please check out a page I wrote on Squidoo.com: www.squidoo.com/naming-multicultural-babies
I believe many of your readers would find it interesting.

Regards,
Chou Doufu
ChouDoufu@Easton.us
Sophie Learns Spanish
(Book & CD-ROM)

Sophie has always wanted to learn Spanish. This summer she is off to stay with her friend Pablo in Spain. Follow Sophie, Pablo and Curro the dog as they go to the beach, dress up for a fiesta and even go to a football match, picking up over 200 useful words and phrases as you go along. If you get stuck at any time, turn to Sophie’s handy phrasebook for a list of essential vocabulary, together with a simple guide to pronunciation. There is also an exciting CD-ROM packed with spoken Spanish that will give you the confidence to have a go at speaking a new language yourself. Click on scenes from the book to see and hear Spanish as Sophie’s adventures come to life. Four top games give you a chance to test what you have learned.
Suitable for ages 7+
More info: www.languageland.co.uk

My Life Story

Available as a dual language book in English with Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, Turkish & Urdu. My Life Story gives children the opportunity to voice their individuality, share their strengths and rich cultural experiences. A dual language 36 page pack developed by teachers and piloted extensively in schools. My Life Story is fully photocopiable. The pack is designed for use by bilingual pupils at different levels and ages to write about their lives. Suitable for ages 7 to 14
More info: www.languageland.co.uk

Language Land is a small family run business specialising in high quality educational language products. Want to keep language fun for your multilingual children? Or maybe you want to learn a new language? We invite you to stop by for a visit and let us help you find what you are looking for!

Visit us today to learn more about our FREE SHIPPING options! www.languageland.co.uk
Harry Learns French (Book & CD-ROM)

Harry has always been mad about France, and this summer he is off to stay with his French cousin in Brittany. Follow Harry, Lea and Filou the dog’s adventures as they go to the seaside, the shops, a family farm and a fancy dress party, picking up over 200 words and phrases as you go along.

If you get stuck at any time, turn to Harry’s handy phrasebook for a list of essential vocabulary, together with a simple guide to pronunciation. There is also an exciting CD-ROM packed with spoken French that will give you the confidence to have a go at speaking a new language yourself. Click on scenes from the book to see and hear French as Harry’s adventures come to life. Four exciting games also help you test what you have learnt.

Suitable for ages 7+
More info: www.languageland.co.uk

My House Interactive CD-ROM

Welcome home!
Young children will love the variety offered by My House CD-ROM. With a click of the mouse, they’ll be able to furnish their house, choose clothes for their wardrobe, and decide who gets to relax where. Will the bathtub go in the living room? Will Dad do the cooking tonight? My House also includes a counting game, a vocabulary builder and more fun activities to stimulate learning. My House is part of the “My…” series, in which children develop decision-making skills, learning to recognise their errors and understand their choices. Narrated instructions are available in English or a choice of ten languages on one CD-ROM - Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Somali, Spanish and Urdu - making the “My…” series perfect for language learning too.

Suitable for ages 3 to 5
More info: www.languageland.co.uk

Fly into Spring with these language favorites!
That’s My Mum

A dual language book available in English with French, German, Italian, Portuguese or Spanish. Written in the first person, Mia tells us of her experience of being a child of mixed heritage. Find out how she and Kai overcome the prejudice of being judged by the colour of their skin.


More info: www.languageland.co.uk

My Car Interactive CD ROM

Let’s go on a trip!
Young children will love the variety offered by My Car CD-ROM. With a click of the mouse, they’ll be able to choose the colour of their car; attach wheels, doors and lights; and take off on a journey to the seaside, the High Street, or the countryside. Will dad come along? And the puppy too?

Further activities available on My Car include :: a counting game :: a vocabulary builder :: a jigsaw puzzle and much more! My Car is part of the “My…” series, in which children develop decision-making skills, learning to recognise their errors and understand their choices.

Narrated instructions are available in English or a choice of ten languages on one CD-ROM · Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Somali, Spanish and Urdu · making the “My…” series perfect for language learning too. Suitable for ages 3 to 5

More info: www.languageland.co.uk
Fly into Spring with these language favorites!

LinguaFun Language Learning Card Games (with Audio CD)

Available in German, French, Italian & Spanish

Everyone’s a winner with LinguaFun Card Games!

The colourful illustrated cards add to the fun of playing favourite games such as Go Fish, Solitaire, Concentration and Gin Rummy. Plus, every player can easily learn to make over 10,000 sentences.

45-minute Audio Reinforcement. Parrot the native pronunciation on the audio that presents all card text along with a variety of sentence combinations. Two 54-card decks. Learn everyday vocabulary and sentences with the Family Series deck. Add useful travel phrases and sentences with the Travel Series deck. Includes Game Instructions for 1-4 players.

Suitable for ages 7+

More info: www.languageland.co.uk

My Talking Dictionary & Interactive CD-ROM

This unique bilingual picture dictionary introduces over 750 widely used words into 30 themes with stunning illustrations. My Talking Dictionary has transliterations, a pictorial index and is remarkably clear. A further creative feature is the accompanying interactive CD Rom. Find out how to pronounce the words, listen as often as you like and have fun with Drag & Drop, Roll & Reveal and Find & Play activities.

Suitable for ages 5 to 13 years.

We sell My Talking Dictionary in 21 dual language editions!

More info: www.languageland.co.uk
books on multilingualism...

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**Raising Bilingual Children**  
by Carey Myles

Carey Myles takes the reader step by step through the world of raising multilingual children. This easy to read book is packed with real-world advice, practical tips and fabulous references. Parents who are just getting started with their multilingual journey will appreciate the author’s attention to basics, while families who are already well along their journey will find support in the breadth of guidance. Chapter after chapter, this book broadens our understanding of the complexity of growing up multilingually while at the same time keeping us encouraged and motivated. The publisher of this book has gone out of business. Search online stores, such as [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) to find a copy.

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**The Care and Education of Young Bilinguals: An Introduction for Professionals**  
by Colin Baker

Although the title of this book indicates its intended audience is the world of professionals (teachers, speech therapists, doctors, psychologist and more), parents motivated to understand more about the role that multilingualism plays in their lives will find this easy to read book extremely interesting and helpful. Colin Baker, an expert in raising bilingual children, spells out a number of issues facing families and educators today. He answers some of our most pressing questions through his discussion of research and studies, and he sheds light on difficulties and issues which multilingual children face in today’s world. Available from the publisher, Multilingual Matters: [www.multilingual-matters.com](http://www.multilingual-matters.com)
There is more than just factual literature out there on bilingualism! Check out the following memoirs for an in-depth description of what goes on in a bilingual’s mind:

**Heading South, Looking North: A Bilingual Journey**
by Ariel Dorfman

A fascinating account of bilingualism in which the author, Ariel Dorfman, describes how he constructs his identity through language. It is a conflicted, complex process in which he is torn between two languages and two cultural spheres – the United States and South America. The story of his personal quest for identity alternates with accounts of the political situation in Chile in the 70s. Available from the publisher, Penguin: [www.penguingroup.com](http://www.penguingroup.com)

**Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language**
By Eva Hoffman

This book should not be confused with the movie starring Bill Murray. In this childhood memoir, the author describes the immigrant experience in North America. As we follow her from the Old World in Poland to the New World in Canada as a thirteen-year-old and eventually on to the United States, we become witnesses to her quest for identity and language. A deeply poignant and intellectual memoir. Available from the publisher, Penguin: [www.penguingroup.com](http://www.penguingroup.com)
Die besten Kinderklassiker

This beautiful collection contains the most famous and loved classical children’s tales Max and Moritz, Struwwelpeter, Kleiner Häwelmann, Pinocchio and Peterchens Mondfahrt. Not only children will love the stories, but parents will feel like going back in time when they are reading these German classics. A must for every Kinderzimmer!

Wort für Wort

How do you write "Pirat"? Name the first letter in "Insel"!

This game allows children to learn German words in a fun way and several different play levels help to keep it interesting and challenging for older children. You have to place the right letter next to the picture and spell the word. The parrot on the spinning wheel will tell you how many letters you are allowed to take and you can self-correct your spelling by looking at the picture’s backside.

The game contains 45 picture cards, 90 letter cards, 1 spinning wheel featuring a parrot, 4 sticker, German instructions

Mein Quiz-O-Fant

Learning is fun with this game from the popular series Wieso?Weshalb?Warum? aimed at children aged 4-7 years. 10 different topics like animals, vehicles, farm, food, dinosaur etc. can be explored and a magnetic elephant will help you find the answer if you need some help or want to confirm it. The game encourages children to discover and ask questions beyond the obvious and with its three different game levels it is attractive for older kids as well. The game contains 12 playing cards (printed on both sides), 1 magnetic elephant, 24 play chips, German instructions.
Wieso? Weshalb? Warum? Am Meer

This book is the newest of the series Wieso? Weshalb? Warum? Junior which is for children aged 2 + years. Life in, around and along the ocean is shown in different scenes and explained to the children on their level. The book helps to understand, for example, which animal is living in the ocean or in the dunes, how weather is changing the coast line and what you can do at the beach. There are many lift-a-flaps that reveal more details and are fun to find.

Felix bei den Kindern der Welt

Sophie's rabbit has been to many places and this time he visits the children from different parts of the world. The musical story CD includes 6 songs and takes you to the Sami in the North, the Tourag in the Sahara, the Maori in New Zealand, South Africa, San Francisco and Israel. Felix gets to know different cultures and shares his experiences with Sophie in his letters that he sends home.

Kinder brauchen Träume

A nice collection of 12 songs, including a picture booklet with 160 pages! Rolf Zuckowski and his friends are singing about stories that happen around the year like “Immer wieder kommt ein neuer Frühling”, “Stups, der kleine Osterhase” or “In der Weihnachtstäckerei”. A nice CD to listen to in the car or at home!

We offer a wide selection of popular German children books, CDs/DVDs/Software, toys, games & more products imported from Germany in our store and invite you to browse!

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Do you need a special book or other German product? Contact us and we will do our best to find it!
Raising Multilingual Children

Why the Fuss?

By Madalena Cruz-Ferreira

When is the last time you heard monolingual parents question whether or not they should speak their own languages with their children? If most of the world speaks more than one language, what makes multilingual families question their choices?
Have you ever wondered why no monolingual family worries about the best way of raising their child monolingually? The issue doesn’t arise in monolingual families because their use of language will, expectedly, be natural: the parents will speak to their child the (one) language that comes naturally to them, and the child will naturally learn it. In contrast, families which make a decision to raise their children multilingually, that is, in two or more languages, are bound to start at once seeking information and advice about what exactly should be done to achieve this purpose successfully. But have you also wondered why multilingual families should worry about this at all? In other words, what is it that makes multilingual families hesitate to resort to what must come naturally to them too, as far as uses of language are concerned?

The reason for this perceived lack of information about raising multilingual children is not that multilinguals are in the minority: they’re not. Most people around the world are multilingual. The reason is that most of what has been published and discussed about multilingualism comes from monolingual sources, which besides see no paradox in taking findings about monolingual children as the norm from which to seek insight into child multilingualism.

This article draws on my own experience as a researcher in (child) multilingualism and a parent of three children who are multilingual in Portuguese (my language), Swedish (my husband’s language) and English (the children’s school and peer language). Since parents usually express their concerns over their children’s language use around a core of questions and worries, I chose to present the article in dialogue form, with a number of commonly raised issues as headings.

What is multilingualism?
Questions about multilingualism start with its definition. There are virtually as many definitions of multilingualism as there are writers who deal with the matter, which means that no two people are actually talking about the same thing when they talk about ‘multilingualism’. Here is one (I hope!) straightforward approach, to start us off: multilingualism involves the regular use of several languages. This applies to countries as well as individuals, the latter being our concern here. A multilingual is thus someone who needs and uses several languages in daily life. This in turn means that a multilingual is not the sum of several monolinguals: if you use several languages in exactly the same way, every day and for the same purposes, then you don’t need several languages. One is enough. Typically, the different languages of a multilingual develop in different ways, precisely because they are needed for different communicative purposes.

How can my child become multilingual?
People become multilingual in exactly the same way and for exactly the same reasons that people become monolingual: because they need several languages, or only one language, respectively, for their everyday communicative needs. In other words, it is as natural to grow up multilingual as it is to grow up monolingual. Children learn the language(s) around them in the same way that they learn the social behaviours and cultural traditions to which they are exposed, through experiencing these in meaningful practice. Becoming multilingual is not a ‘trick’ that some ‘clever’ children are ‘taught’ in order to ‘impress’. There’s nothing impressive about being multilingual, because it is the natural consequence of multilingual needs. Its purpose is what explains the motivation to learn languages, and is in fact the reason why human beings learn to speak at all. Need, and the motivation that goes with it, together, are the driving force behind all human endeavours.

When should my child begin to learn a new language?
When the need to use that language arises. Some children learn several languages from day one, for example in mixed families where different languages are used simultaneously. For these children, all of their languages (or none of them) are ‘new’. Their multilingualism shows that learning different languages does not necessarily mean learning them one after the other, and that there is therefore no need to wait until one language is in place, as some people would have it, to start introducing a new one -- the problem here is of course deciding when exactly is a language ever “in place”, given that language learning is a lifelong process.

Other mixed families choose to start off with a single language, and introduce other languages successively later on. Yet other families find it best to switch language according to place or time, for example, one language at home, another outside, or one language on weekdays, another on weekends. Any of these strategies will work fine. The bottom line is that the children understand what’s going on, as far as language uses in the family are concerned. There is no ‘golden rule’, no single ‘foolproof’ strategy to raise multilingual children successfully: the family decides what best suits their needs, because every family is unique and so is every child.

The child’s age doesn’t matter, by the way. What really matters is first, that the child feels the need to use different languages on an everyday basis and, second, that the child is consistently exposed to natural uses of language.

I am multilingual myself, from birth. Should I choose only one language to speak to my child and, if so, which?
Whether you’re monolingual or multilingual, matters of language policy are best decided by the family itself. Often, there is in fact no conscious ‘decision’ about language use, in that one language or another will spontaneously emerge as the right one, in actual practice.

This means that you don’t need to force yourself to use one single language at all. Contrived uses of language have nothing to do with nurturing children. Perhaps you will dis-
cover that one of your languages sounds more appropriate to discuss, say, school matters, whereas a different language definitely matches a good romping before bedtime better? Or that the language that gushed out of you to react to your child’s scraped knee and bloody nose at the playground is not the same that you find yourself using while giving instructions about tooth-brushing.

In short, don’t become self-conscious about your uses of language. Children will attune themselves to whatever language uses they find around them, because they have no idea whether mums and dads ‘should’ speak one language each, or different languages, or more than one language, or both the same language, or which language goes with what. Whatever choice of language(s) comes naturally to you will come as naturally to your child. Just play it ‘by heart’.

I became quite fluent in a second language, and I would like my children to learn it too. Can I use this language with them?

Yes. There are reported cases of successful child multilingualism in families where parents chose to use a language which is not their first language. The only condition is that language which is directed to a child sound genuine. Language ‘lessons’ play no part in parenting.

Life with a child is all about being there for the child, and your language is an inherent part of this. Ask yourself, before you decide on a language policy for the home, which language do you feel comfortable using to play with your children, to comfort, cajole them and tell them off, to sing to them and recount fairy tales, and to discuss whatever will come to matter to them, or to you, as they grow up. Keep also in mind that a language is much more than itself: it mirrors a culture too, and a way of being in life.

Why should I raise my child multilingually? Isn’t it true that language development in multilinguals is often delayed, or impaired?

Many monolinguals have indeed persuaded themselves that multilingualism results in language delay or impairment, in the same way that they believe that their language is the only one worth learning at all, as a pre-emptive measure. I know of no multilinguals who agree.

The myth that multilingualism is synonymous with linguistic impairment comes from early studies on multilingualism, where multilingual children were unfairly compared to monolingual children (or even monolingual adults). More recent findings, gleaned from properly controlled fair experiments, show that language abilities develop in the same way and at the same pace among monolinguals and multilinguals alike. The fact that multilinguals have several linguistic systems to deal with will neither delay nor speed up their language development. What we can sensibly say is that monolingual and multilingual children develop differently, which is as commonsensical as saying that children with or without siblings develop differently. There’s no more reason to take monolingual children as the norm for comparison with multilingual children than there is to take single children as the norm against which to assess siblings.

How many languages can our brain handle? Isn’t it true that multilingualism impairs cognitive development?

Our brain can handle as many languages as needed. Some people make do with one single language throughout their lives, other people do equally fine with three, four, or more languages every day. If multilingualism were a cause of impaired cognitive development, then the majority of human-kind would suffer from some kind of cognitive deficiency. As far as we know, there are no more cognitively deficient individuals among multilinguals than among monolinguals. It is true that a lot of people (mostly monolinguals, yes) have speculated throughout the years about multilingualism being synonymous with reduced ability, in languages themselves or in other intellectual domains. As if increased linguistic space in the brain would automatically result in decreased brain roominess for other languages, with associated impairment in other mental activities. To me, this kind of reasoning makes as much sense as claiming that a pianist should refrain from learning to play the saxophone, or else risk losing the ability to play the piano, or to do math, or both. Fortunately, our brain capacity is much larger and much more flexible than popular views about it lead us to believe. We all know, for example, that some people reckon in their heads how much they are going to pay for the groceries heaped in their trolley before they reach the checkout counter, whereas other people need a pocket calculator to do their times tables. It is equally true that some people need different languages and calculators, whereas other people don’t, or vice versa. Our brain does just fine, whatever we require of it. Increased mental activity, dedicated to languages or otherwise, has the same effect on the brain that a good workout has on the body: it invigorates.

(Parts of this article appeared in Swea Singapore (vol.1, pp.30-32, 2004), the magazine of the Swedish Women’s Educational Association in Singapore.)

Madalena Cruz-Ferreira hails from Portugal and has lived in Singapore for 12 years, with her Swedish husband and their three trilingual children. She has several publications on child multilingualism, including a book, Three is a Crowd? (Multilingual Matters, 2006). Webpage: profile.nus.edu.sg/fass/ellmcf/. Email: ellmcf@nus.edu.sg
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Voices spilled out into the street from an open window. Japanese peppered with Korean and even a little English. I pulled the door open and before I could even take off my coat was handed a bowl of steaming hot buckwheat noodles. I settled down with “the adults” while Bailey headed off to the adjoining “kids room”.

After wishing everyone a happy new year and finishing off the noodles, I went to check on Bailey. There were about six cousins in the room—some Japanese, some Korean and some a mix of both. Cousin Y, who is a year older than Bailey, was standing in the middle of the circle. He would say something in Korean and the other kids would repeat it and then there was clapping and jumping. He was trying to teach them a Korean song.

A few of the younger kids got bored and left to play cars in the far corner of the room. I was sure Bailey would soon follow, but he didn’t. Soon the group had dwindled to just three—Y, Bailey and another cousin. The three of them stayed together most of the night working on the song and dance.

A few hours later, we packed up a tired Bailey and put a sleeping Sophie in her car seat and headed home. At home, as I pulled the covers up around Bailey’s neck, he began to sing in Korean. He had memorized the whole song in just a few hours!

I don’t know how much he will remember when he sees his cousin again, but that one song created a tie for him to his Korean roots (his grandmother is Korean) and made me wonder why we hadn’t made that connection for him earlier. I don’t want him to forget the parts that make him up—whether the words be in Japanese, English or Korean.

Baby steps, but also important building blocks for the future.
“You are from where? You don’t look like you’re from there! You could be one of us!”

I still wonder if to an immigrant this should sound like a compliment or like an insult. It probably depends on what “side” you as an immigrant have taken yourself. Are you a native of Homeland and just living in Foreignland, or do you feel you are more from Foreignland but with Homeland heritage?

I never know what to say. I suppose I try to end the conversation politely and not let the other person know that they just put their finger on an impossible issue. It will just give you confused looks; believe me, I’ve tried.

Soon after indefinitely moving from one country to another you will find that you are not what you thought you were. This happens in its strongest form the first time you emigrate. You thought – well, you didn’t even “think” that, that’s just how it was – that being “you” meant fitting in, being like everyone else, doing the things everyone else does. Those things included simple things like saying hello a certain way, saying “my father” instead of “my dad” when talking to others, wearing nice clothes to work, inviting people to your house without notice weeks in advance and ignoring people on the bus.

Actually I got weird reactions to all these things at some point of being an immigrant. You think it’s not a big deal. Well, it’s not but these things are just symptoms… that no matter what you are to yourself, you are something else to those who perceive you as such.

Your automatic response to the weird looks will be small subtle changes to your behavior that you might experience as limiting your freedom of being yourself, but the fact that you are constantly being reminded of “not being like everyone else” will be too burdensome after a while and you will try to avoid attracting attention knowing that being left alone comes at a price in new surroundings.

So who is right then? If you are “normal” in one place and the distance of several hundred or thousand of kilometers suddenly makes you “abnormal,” who is wrong? Who are you if others do not define you? If you adapt completely it might make you feel like you’re erasing yourself. If you stay exactly how you are you will be misunderstood as just “trying to make a statement” by being different, or being hostile to your environment plain and simple.

See you can’t win… unless you understand that most of what you thought “made” you is easily exchangeable without actually touching the real you. It’s a scary thought for most people. What would you be without speaking your language, without going to the same places you went since childhood, without being able to completely compare your life to your family’s or friends’? Would you still be you?

I say “yes”. I wouldn’t be who I was when all I knew was Homeland, nor would I immediately turn into a native of Foreignland. I would be more me because I would make a conscious choice about what defines me and what not. I would be more me because I would distinguish between what’s essential to me and what’s just a tool to communicate with and live in a community. I would be more me because I could be true to myself in two worlds without compromise and without dictatorship from people’s perceptions.

Dinka Souzek is a Croatian-born Austrian, living with her American husband and two children in the U.S.A. She blogs at www.souzek.com/dinka/.

Photos provided by the author
Identity
What Research says about Multilingualism

By Colin Baker
Multilingualism is widespread in the world: Many people in the world are multilingual and not just bilingual. Multilinguals are much more common than is often expected. For example, many Swedish people are fluent in Swedish, German and English. Many individuals in the African and Indian continents speak a local, regional and an official or international language. In Zaire and India for example, children may learn a local language at home, a regional or national language in the community or at school, and then an international language such as English or French as they proceed through schooling.

Routes to multilingualism: Early (simultaneous) trilingualism, when a child is exposed to three languages from birth, is as possible as (sequential) trilingualism achieved through schooling (e.g. one or two languages learnt at school).

One successful route to trilingualism that is documented in the research literature is parents speaking two different languages to their children at home. The children then take their education through a third language. Alternatively, the children pick up a third language from the grandparents, carers, visitors, playmates or the mass media.

Such research tends to find that the three languages are never equal or ‘balanced’, and that balance frequently changes through the teenage and adult years. Each language tends to have different uses (e.g. at school, work, religion, particular people). Therefore, the relative proficiency of a trilingual in each of their three languages tends to change over time. Trilingualism, in practice, shifts more than bilingualism over time.

The majority language of the community is particularly likely to influence the relative strengths of those three languages. For example, if English is very dominant in the local community and in education, that language is likely to become (e.g. in the teenage years) the dominant language.

Three Research Case Studies: There are a number of well reported case studies of the development of trilingual children.

(1) One case study (Charlotte Hoffmann) concerns Spanish (acquired mostly from the father and au pairs), German (acquired mostly from the mother and visits), and English (acquired mostly among the peer group and in school). The one person-one language (OPOL) approach was followed. However, English became the dominant language due to schooling and similar age friends in and out of school.

(2) Suzanne Quay researched a child raised in German (the language spoken by the father to the child and the language used between mother and father) and English (used by the mother when addressing the child). Both parents were fluent in Japanese which was the language of the local community (e.g. where their son attended day-care that operated in Japanese). There was a change in language exposure over the first two years (see the table below), for example due to visits abroad and changes in the father’s work schedule. Such changes are quite common for early trilinguals and bilinguals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of child</th>
<th>% English heard</th>
<th>% German heard</th>
<th>% Japanese heard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth to 11 months</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 months to 1;0 year (attending day-care)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1;0 to 1;5 months</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1;5 to 1;6</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is an interesting history beyond the table. The table shows that this child was initially less exposed to German than English. At 15 months (1;3), it was not apparent that the child understood much German. Yet after two weeks in Germany at 15 months, the mother reports that he ‘shocked us with how much he understood in German when spoken to by the extended family’.

This is a common experience for multilingual families. Understanding (and speaking) a second or third language quickly grows once there is sufficient exposure and incentive. A third language may be understood and not spoken during the childhood and teenage years. But once there is a sufficient stimulus (e.g. visiting a country where that ‘third’ language is spoken widely), the potential is realized. Understanding quickly (e.g. in a two week period) develops into speaking. A passive third language becomes active.

Suzanne Quay shows that the child was a developing trilingual rather than...
an active trilingual. This child preferred to speak Japanese to his parents as he had more vocabulary in Japanese, and his parents understood and accepted his Japanese conversations. He tended to be a passive trilingual, understanding English and German, but speaking Japanese. This is a valuable point for some parents, in that one or two of a child’s languages may tend to be dominant, with not all three languages being constantly used.

(3) Several publications by Jean-Marc Dewaele of Birkbeck in London follow Livia, his daughter, raised in Dutch by her mother, French by her father, with English acquired in the London neighbourhood. The mother and father use Dutch when speaking together, making Dutch the dominant but not exclusive language of the family. All three languages are used in family exchanges at times. The case is important as it reveals that trilingualism is highly feasible and valuable in children. English became Livia’s ‘default language’ after beginning to mix with other children in the neighbourhood. From five months to two and a half years, Livia learnt Urdu from a child-minder, thus becoming quadrilingual at an early age. However, with no practice of Urdu after childcare, that language was not sustained into later childhood.

By one year and two months, she had a passive knowledge of some 150 French, Dutch, Urdu and English words. Multiword utterances in Dutch and French appeared at two years two months. Awareness of her languages came before her second birthday, for example, in suggesting that the mother duck in her bath was Dutch-speaking. The value of multilingualism was also understood at a very early age: “If she doesn’t get the cookie she ordered in one language, [Livia] code-switches to the other, just to make sure we understand her request.”

However, by five years of age, status and acceptance by peers had become important to Livia. Her father reported that she “does not want me to speak French to her at school and addresses me … in English, or whispers French in my ear”. She wanted to avoid standing out from her peers, even in multilingual London where schoolchildren speak some 300+ languages.

At ten years of age, Livia remains trilingual, with English as the dominant external and internal (inner) language. She speaks Dutch and French fluently and reads in English and French. Her parents provided triliteracy experience by reading to her in Dutch and French. Her pronunciation in all three languages is native-like, but she makes the occasional grammatical error in French and Dutch.

Jean-Marc Dewaele’s home experience is like that of almost all bilinguals and multilinguals. When Livia is with her parents, they move effortlessly between their three languages. Since they all understand each other in the three languages, it is communicatively effective and efficient to move between languages (e.g. talking about school in English and about family matters in Dutch). But when Livia is with monolingual English speakers or Dutch children, she will keep to the one language only.

There is a valuable point for multilingual parents from this case. It is not just parents who control or influence the destiny of a child’s three or more languages. The child does as well. Children are influenced by their peer group and the mass media, by family friends and the extended family, by experiences in the street and the playground. Parents are like gardeners that prepare the soil, plant, water and care. Growth in languages is greatly promoted by skilful gardeners, but is also affected by the nature of the plant, other flowers in the garden, the changing environment, and shifting language climates.

**Trilingual Schooling:** A growing movement in Europe is trilingual education. All three languages, once sufficiently developed, are used to teach content. Examples of successful trilingual schooling are found in the Basque Country (Basque, Spanish, English), Catalonia (Catalan, Spanish, English), Finland (Finnish, Swedish, English) and Romania (Romanian, Hungarian and English). See the reference at the end for further details.

**Overview of Research:** Research on trilingualism tends to conclude that bilinguals tend to be better language learners than monolinguals. Studies on the effect of bilingualism on third language acquisition tend to confirm the advantages of bilinguals over monolinguals in language learning. The thinking advantages of bilingualism (see reference at the end) such as a wider linguistic repertoire, enhanced learning strategies, cognitive flexibility, metalinguistic awareness and the development of enhanced linguistic processing strategies are used to explain this positive effect of bilingualism on acquiring a third language.

Working in Australia, Professor Michael Clyne found multiple positive social, cultural and cognitive advantages for being a trilingual. Trilinguals were found to be effective and continuing language learners, whose
bilingualism was a language apprenticeship for further language learning. He found that acquisition of a third language deepens an interest in other languages, cultures and countries.

There may also be increasing advantages for multilinguals in employment. Where there are customer relationships (e.g. hotels, transnational companies, selling abroad), multilinguals have the much needed language skills. In the fast-growing global economy, multilinguals will become even more highly prized in the employment market. Any child speaking any bilingual or trilingual combination of English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese (Mandarin), Russian and Hindi is wonderfully placed for work in the global economy. The world economy over the next decade is said to depend particularly on what happens in the BRIC countries: Brazil, Russia, India and China who all have huge populations and are ambitious for growth. Multilinguals are thus going to become prize possessions in companies that will trade with the BRIC countries.

**To Conclude:** Multilinguals do not just have advantages in owning many languages. They may also have advantages that are social and economic, creating global citizens who are encultured, enlightened and very employable.

Making it work with more than two!
When Mary Vogl (an American professor of French) and Mohammed Hirchi (a Moroccan professor of Arabic) got married and had children in the United States, they never actually discussed what languages they would use with the kids in which contexts, or, as Mary puts it, they had “a lack of a determined plan of attack.” As a result, Mary usually spoke French with them, Mohammed a mix of French, English, and Arabic. Latifah was not an early talker, and at 28 months she went through a month-long period of severe stuttering. While 21-month-old Tariq speaks less than his age mates, he can use the French or the English words for his favorite things (e.g. “Papa Noël” and “Santa”), body parts, and so forth, and he understands English, French, and Arabic. Most of the kids’ books are in French, but they attend English-speaking day care and preschool, and their interactions with aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents (Mary’s family is local) are all in English.

In 2005-6, however, they spent a year in Morocco, where their daughter attended a French-language preschool and Mohammed’s sister, who speaks only Moroccan Arabic, took care of the baby during the day. Now five-year-old Latifah can understand Arabic and makes herself understood, but without many details. Her spoken French became as fluent as that of her peers, and in fact, during their year abroad, Latifah seemed to forget a lot of her English! Tariq also got very little input in English between ages four and 15 months. Back in the US for six months now, the kids have transitioned to an English-speaking environment outside the home with French and Arabic as the home languages. They now have lots of children’s books in Arabic as well. Latifah is very excited about going back to Morocco this summer to play with her cousins and re-immersing herself in an Arabic and French milieu. During his stay, Tariq will no doubt be motivated to learn the Arabic words for the favorite two-year-old expressions: “no!”, “mine!” and “stop it!”

By Sarah Dodson-Knight
I am American-born and raised in the Chicago area, then moved to New York City when I was 18 and met and fell in love with Ivan, who was born and raised in Sofia, Bulgaria. We lived in New York for 10 years where Ivan perfected his English and now speaks as a native, (thanks to his fabulous wife!). We then decided to move to Vienna, Austria where Ivan's father has started his own business. We took an intensive German course in the first year of our life in Vienna.

Our first child Zac was born in September 2003; we each spoke to him in our native languages and noticed that his speech development was lagging behind other kids his age. Since everyone told us this was to be expected we didn’t worry too much, but we never spoke German to him at all at first. We figured our bad German would really be a fourth language to him!

During the pregnancy of our second child we hired a Nanny, Elka from Bulgaria, who spoke only Bulgarian. She helped with Zac because I was on bed rest for the last 3 months of my pregnancy. Zac was at the time one and a half years old. He was speaking some English words but very few Bulgarian ones as his father was at work during the day. Once Elka was with us, Zac’s Bulgarian vocabulary increased dramatically, but his English up to the present has been his strongest spoken language -although he understands both languages equally well. Zac has started Kindergarten in October and goes daily for about 3 hours. He has learned a few German words and phrases but is still struggling to fit in.

Luca, our second child, was born in June 2005, he is one and a half years old and has just started speaking words other than Mama and Tate(Daddy). He has heard both Bulgarian and English equally at home since his birth and understands a bit of both languages, but he, too, is speaking much later than his one-language pals.

Zac knows who speaks what language at home and speaks English to his mommy, and Bulgarian to Elka. With his father he mixes English and Bulgarian more because he hears us speaking English to each other. However, often Ivan starts to speak Bulgarian to me and I will then reply in English when speaking in front of the kids. Now that German has entered the picture, we have had a few interesting mix-ups and frustrations. Zac said to me recently “Mommy I want to play with steak.” I said, “What?” He repeated himself many times than I thought well, this must be Bulgarian. Then he finally took me by the hand and got some markers and said “steak mommy!” I said, “Oh you mean ‘Stift’!”

Zac’s kindergarten teachers have asked me to buy a few games that they have at the school to teach him and gave us a few videos for him to watch. (We have English satellite television, our one big treat for mommy & daddy.) I try to pop in German words when I think he is receptive. I run with him after school pulling him along yelling, “Schneller, schneller!” and again “Langsam, langsam!” for him to slow down. I think he understands better when I give him “physical” examples and make games out of it. Such as where did mommy park the car? We then call out “Volvo wo bist Du?” When I try too much at once he can get really annoyed with me because I think the school is a bit overwhelming for him at the moment. Mostly I try not to stress too much (good luck at that!) but hope for the best.
We fell into trilingualism by accident. Our children Isabella (5) and Dominik (2) are half Ecuadorian (from my husband), a quarter Austrian and a quarter Korean (from me). The languages we are dealing with in our family are German, Spanish and English.

After our daughter was born, we discovered that it was the easiest for us to just keep on speaking our mother tongues to her, as that felt the most natural. So we used the one parent, one language approach: my husband spoke Spanish, I German. English we kept for conversation between ourselves only. Since we lived in Ecuador, the majority language was Spanish. This went well until we relocated to Austria. After my daughter entered kindergarten, German took over completely. This was probably to be expected: I was at home speaking German all the time, the majority language was German, at kindergarten they spoke German, her little friends speak German, their grandmother, with whom we spend a lot of time, speaks German … My children heard Spanish/English only when their father was around, which, for a while due to increased business trips, was not a lot. I realized that if we continued this way our children would grow up as monolinguals despite our trilingual endeavor.

We therefore decided to change our strategy and reinforce one of our minority languages. English was the most obvious choice. We spoke English in the presence of our children all the time anyway. The difference was that we now addressed them directly in English as well. So, currently English is our family/home language, German we leave to the environment (and to Omi) and Spanish my husband uses when interacting with our children – when alone with them. We felt comfortable with this new arrangement, and my daughter did not mind at all that we suddenly talked to her in English. On the contrary, she seemed to like to be able to talk to Papi in English because it greatly eased their communication (her English vocabulary is considerably greater than in Spanish).

It was amazing, really: within six months only, she activated her passive English skills and now chatters away in English with ease. English playgroups and English-speaking friends also play a major role in reinforcing the notion that English is a “useful” language for her. The status quo right now is that German is still the slightly dominant language, but English is catching up quickly. Spanish she knows in fragments, only, but that is to be expected. Our youngest son is only now starting to speak, some words in both German and English. We have come a long way, but we still have a fascinating ride ahead of us, yet!
I am a German, married to an Indian-Chinese Malaysian, living in Singapore. Accordingly, our language situation is quite complex, requiring our children (Arun, 4 ¾, Leena, 2 ½) to learn five languages: mother (German), family (English), grandparents (Tamil), nanny (Malay), kindergarten (English/Malay/Mandarin).

Our success so far has been quite mixed. Leena has been a breeze so far. She began speaking very early and very well in three languages (German, English and Malay), plus she understands Tamil. She has not yet had exposure to Chinese, so we will see how that goes.

Arun, on the other hand, started speaking very late (2+) and even now only speaks English reasonably well. His German is acceptable, but he has a thick accent and mixes it with a lot of English. Nevertheless, he refuses to speak any language other than German with me – which is great for his German, but makes it impossible for me to help him with his English or Mandarin homework. He is also increasingly resisting the other three languages, questioning why he should bother with them since he is a “German boy” (very embarrassing when he says that in front of my in-laws!).

Arun’s resistance and slow progress has often made me wonder whether we are overdoing it. However, given our family situation and the education system here, it is impossible to decide which language to give up – if any. I just hope that they will appreciate this one day.

**Ute:**
German, English, Malay, Tamil and Mandarin
I’m American and speak English with our 3.5-year-old son. My husband is Turkish, born in Germany, and speaks Turkish and German with him. We live in Germany, so our son gets German full-time in kindergarten. My in-laws live close by and speak only Turkish with our son. I do occasionally speak to him in German or Turkish but mostly to correct his grammar. So far, we have had no problems with our three languages. At home we sometimes mix (my husband and I), and we find our son doing the same, but only with us. It seems he knows that we understand all three languages but that not everyone else does. As of late, I noticed that he speaks his English like his German or Turkish sometimes but has no major problems otherwise. A quick correction and he’s fine.
Way before the stork arrived with Maria Felice in late 2003, my husband and I knew we would raise a bilingual child. It wasn’t so much a conscious decision, but a thing we just knew we would do, kind of like how we’d know to feed her, bathe her and kiss her.

Spanish is my first language. I grew up in a large tribe of Cuban immigrants in Miami and my iron-willed abuelita made sure the grandkids spoke español. My husband, American-born and of Scotch-Irish descent, has a working grasp on Spanish, but a greater appreciation for the benefits of being multi-tongued and global-minded.

So, with Spanish in my cells and a supportive husband I should be able to tell you my talkative 3-year-old habla (mostly) español... 

Exhaustive. At the end of so many days I think “Tomorrow, we’ll do more.”

Why is it so tough around here? My reasons—or rationalizations, if you will: I am American-born; I am a journalist who has spent a career thinking and writing in English; and lastly, I live far from family in a tiny town outside of Nashville, TN—a place not exactly spilling over with Spanish-speakers to support our endeavor.

Now the amazing thing is this: The child understands Spanish. She understands every single word we say to her. She also sings Spanish songs—traditional nursery rhymes and Ricky Martin alike. Of late, she also has been asking for translations: How do you say sleeves? What’s the word for forehead? What’s oatmeal in Spanish?

The language has seeped in with the aid of Spanish books, which we have read to her several times a day since before she had head control. And, despite my being the only person in the Music City surrounds who has no tone, we sing all day long. It keeps the lessons fun and unlike lessons at all. I pretend I don’t know the correct word and she promptly educates me.

Now, we did start with the intention of sticking to the expert-advised one person, one language. It was easy to lull Maria with the Spanish songs my own grandmother sung to me. It was easy to point and say “pelota,” “leche,” “gato.” And in the early days, I had a lot of help laying the foundation.

When I worked outside of my home, Maria had two different nannies. One, who was from the Dominican Republic, propped my 8-month-old on a blanket in front of toys and books and told her it was time for “baby escuela.” The second, a fun-loving, fast-talker from Nicaragua, made everyday seem like a fiesta. Those women were a godsend and probably the major reason Maria’s first words were in Spanish.

When I quit working full-time, Maria was 16-months-old. The more we hung out together, and with other young children, the less Spanish she spoke. The transition was obvious and still saddens me, but I have to admit, it was a little odd to explain to strangers why my toddler didn’t seem to understand them.

We are not the bilingual success I envisioned in those sleepless pre-delivery dawns of 2003, but while my daughter rarely lets forth a full sentence in Spanish, she does understand my rapid-fire palabras. Her accent is fabulous and her interest is growing. We also continue to expose her: A newly-formed Spanish playgroup, a planned trip to Spain, planned enrollment in a Spanish-immersion pre-school.

So, because we haven’t given up, and because we consciously try every day, there’s less kicking of the Latina self over the bilingual thing around here these days. And when my little niña corrects her father’s pronunciation, I know we’re doing something right.

Carrie Ferguson Weir is a freelance writer and co-owner of Los Pollitos Dicen (The Little Chicks Say), a collection of children’s tees with Spanish sayings sold on the Web and in boutiques. She blogs at www.bilingualintheboonies.blogspot.com and you can reach her at mamahen@lospollitosdicen.biz
Corey Heller: Please start by sharing with our readers more about your company, Multilingual Matters (www.multilingual-matters.com). What motivated you and your husband to start a publishing house dedicated to language and culture, and what was it like in the early days?

Marjukka Grover: Our boys were born in 1976 (Tommi) and 1978 (Sami). Back then, there was very little published on bilingualism or culturalism. Erroneous research on semilingualism was still fresh in the minds of those who knew anything about the subject, but our own common sense told us that there must be millions of people in the world learning two or more languages simultaneously without any harm. My husband Mike’s experience as an academic publisher helped us to find research published in various periodicals but none of the journals concentrated solely on bilingualism. Since we already had a firm providing services to academic publishing, it was not too complicated to start a publishing programme. We found a suitable academic editor (Derrick Sharp from the University of Swansea) for Mike’s journal idea, and the first issue of Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development appeared in 1980. After that we started to receive interesting material for books and journals, but when a fantastic, half page book review appeared in The Guardian (one of the UK leading papers) for “Bilingual Children: Guidance for the Family,” we knew for sure that there was a market for our publications.

Corey: Explain a little about what bilingualism was like in your home: what language did you and your spouse each speak with your children? What percentage of time would you say that each language was spoken in your home?

Marjukka: Back in 1970s and 1980s most mothers were “full time mothers” until the children went to school - and I was no exception. Therefore it was easy to make Finnish as the main language our children heard when they were small. We followed the “one language, one person” rule with the exception that, when the boys were very small, Mike supported me by speaking Finnish to them. That worked well for a while, but when dad was not up to discussing in Finnish “how the video works,” the language between father and sons soon settled to English. To make extra sure that their English developed side by side with Finnish they had once a week an “English day” with their grandmother, Naini, who was a retired schoolteacher and very willing to make the day fun with all kind of activities. In the early years Tommi related a language with a person so strictly that he would change the sentence in mid-course from English to Finnish if he made eye contact with me. In fact, our home life was so Finnish that once walking from school with Sami and his friend, a friend asked, “Are we in Finland yet?”
Corey: Were you and your husband consistent in speaking your language? Did you ever switch languages with each other or with your children? Did you speak with your children in a different language when in public or with other friends and family members?

Marjukka: As I mentioned above, we did use the “one person - one language” method in a way that I was ALWAYS speaking Finnish to the boys but Mike would switch between Finnish and English. We felt that Finnish needed extra input. Mike showed the boys that he is willing and proud to speak Finnish, which helped them to value their minority language. Mike was really learning Finnish at the same time as the boys.

I carried on speaking Finnish even when their English-speaking friends were present, unless I was addressing them all. I would very briefly explain in English what I had just said in Finnish so that the friends did not feel left out - or sometimes I would ask the boys to translate. Later on, when I knew their Finnish was good, even if occasionally rusty, I was more flexible.

Corey: Do you remember either of your children having any confusion about their languages? Did you ever worry that you were causing your children to fall behind in their overall language development or that you should stop raising them bilingually?

Marjukka: I don’t recall any serious worries but I went through (like most parents) doubts whether they ever would learn Finnish to on? such a level that was worth the effort. I found it sad when some comments made by some Finns about the boys’ accents or errors made me realise that people did not understand how hard it is to raise children bilingually. When Sami was learning to write in English, he was thinking how he would spell the word in Finnish, which is a phonetical language. When explained it to the teachers they understood the reason, and the “Finnish way”of spelling soon disappeared. Sami has already mentioned in his interview (Multilingual Living Magazine, January-February 2007) the incident which made me almost give up speaking Finnish to them. I will never forget the feeling of isolation and despair when trying to take part in conversations between father and sons on subjects which did not even interest me and being rejected by one short glance. If the boys’ reactions had not been such a horror at the idea of their mother speaking to them in English only – I am sure I would have given up. Thank God they said “äiti et sää voi, ei se kuulostais yhtään kivalta” (“You can’t, mum – it would not sound at all nice”).

Corey: Do you recall any specific ages when your children had especially difficult times? Ages when they felt especially embarrassed? Ages when they felt special and delighted in being bilingual?

Marjukka: For a few months when they started school I seem to remember they spoke to me a bit quietly so that other children could not hear us, but I made a special occasion out of it (?) by praising them a lot, saying how fantastic it is that they can speak two languages and by always explaining to their friends what we were saying. I also made a point to explain to the friends’ parents why it was so important to me to speak Finnish to my children. I am sure being open and giving information helped, and all my friends gave me full support. As I said earlier, the early teens and teenage years are of course a slightly trying time, but by then I was not so worried if they did not answer in Finnish as I knew that the language was firmly rooted.

Bilingualism for the boys was as natural as eating, but I did feel very proud when people commented how easily they switched from one language to another. Occasionally, someone asked what language we were speaking – and once a lady, who was told it was Finnish, said “What use is that – wouldn’t it be better to teach them French?”

Corey: What are some of your fondest positive memories regarding your family’s bilingualism? And what are some particularly negative ones that you feel you can share with us?

Marjukka: One of the fondest memories for me were the arrivals for holidays in Finland and how easily the boys fitted in with my family, chatting happily with Mummi (grandmother) and Vaari (grandfather), who didn’t speak English, and making friends with the neighbours’ children. And the boys chatting to people in the boat returning from Helsinki Zoo and commenting loudly in Finnish “äiti kuuntele – kapteenikin puhuu suomea” (“Mum listen – even the captain is speaking Finnish”).

The only slightly negative side, which had not occurred to me at all, was the question of identity when they became teenagers. Sami has never questioned his identity, which he felt was not an important issue to him, but Tommi has always been very proud of everything Finnish, which at one point aggravated his school friends. He then took an “I don’t care” attitude, grew dreadlocks, started smoking and occasionally behaved in a way...
It was well worth it as the reading and writing skills later on winter sports normal Finnish children play: ski, skate, ice-hockey. know their grandsons well. But most of all the boys learned all the skills in Finnish and Mummi and Vaari had the chance to learn to indeed. Tommi and Sami improved their reading and writing were doing the right thing, but the experiment worked very well being regularly -30 to 35C. At that time I was wondering if we was the coldest in Finland for a hundred years, the temperature the local primary school. Tommi was 10 and Sami 8. That winter the four months they stayed with my parents in Finland attending language and culture. But a real “language bath” for our boys was and the British partners of Finnish women or men Finnish School still exists and is very active teaching younger generations and the following example to explain the difference between mother tongue and foreign language: “The mother tongue is our skin and the foreign language is like a pair of tight jeans, which at first feel stiff and unfamiliar but after they have been worn for a time come to feel easy and comfortable, though they can still never be a substitute for a skin.” (Tove Skutnabb-Kangas: Bilingualism or Not, 1981)

And – yes I do feel we have achieved what we aimed for. Both boys are fluent in Finnish, even though English may be their stronger language, and as well as speaking they can also read and write in Finnish and have a strong connection with my family and Finland.

Corey: Did you travel with your husband and children to your country of origin a lot? Did it have a substantial positive impact on your children’s language and cultural connections? In what ways?

Marjukka: I think bringing up children bilingually without any connection to the country where the minority language is spoken naturally would have been very hard indeed. We made a deliberate effort to spend as many holidays in Finland as was possible (at least once a year but usually twice a year). Language and culture go hand in hand, and by spending time in Finland the boys absorbed Finnish culture and enjoyed the lifestyle their Finnish friends enjoyed; clean air, swimming in beautiful lakes, having hot saunas, cycling in quiet country lanes, skiing in snowy forests, skating on a frozen lake, playing ice-hockey, eating rye bread and blood pancakes, seeing Finnish TV programmes, films, theatre. They are all part of absorbing the language and culture. Now the boys are adults they are very fond of their Finnish roots – and have many times taken their friends over there to visit. It was very important for Sami to take Jenni, his American fiancée, to Finland to meet the famous granddad who promised to sing them a rude war time song when they are 18 but forgot what the age limit was and sang it to the boys many years earlier, to the boys’ delight.

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

Marjukka: 1. Decide and agree early on what the family’s language policy is going to be and stick to it. Make sure that the minority language is spoken/heard often and regularly and that everyone is proud of it. If the partner does not speak it he/she should at least be proud, supportive and try to learn at least a few words.

2. Be consistent but also occasionally flexible. Even if you use the “one language – one person” method (which is highly recommended and has proved to be very successful), don’t
become anxious if the majority language is spoken occasionally by everyone - or if the children prefer to use the minority language. Carry on speaking the minority language even if the children don't seem to be interested in it, but try to make it fun – and create occasions when they have to use the language naturally.

3. Form support groups. When the boys were very small our best support was a German/English family who had two boys of similar age - and where mother spoke German to the children and father English. To be able to compare notes was really useful and gave a lot of support even though the languages were different. Try to start a Saturday school or a minority language club or a “mother/toddler group” which may later develop into a Saturday School.

4. Talk to the head of the school and to your child’s teacher and explain the importance of bilingualism in your family. The school’s positive attitudes toward bilingualism will help, even if they can’t provide lessons in the minority language. Suggest to the teacher that you could give a talk about your country in the child’s class - at a primary school age your children are not yet embarrassed about you coming to school.

5. Invest in SKYPE and cheap telephone calls so that regular contact with the family back at home can be kept. Buy minority language books, cassettes, favourite TV programmes, films, computer games and make sure they are used. You can always tell the children that they can watch a film or play a computer game as long as it is a minority language one. When the boys were very small I used to select only Finnish books and cassettes (sometimes the stories were read by my father) on long car journeys. They had no choice but to listen.

6. Enter them in a school or summer camps in the minority language country - even if it is only for a week or two. The friendships they form may be long lasting.

7. Encourage and prepare your children to take an exam in their minority language. At the age of 14 our boys took a Finnish exam in London which was equivalent to an exam taken after five years of learning as a foreign language. We asked the school to include the result in their final school certificate. Again it was one way of making sure that the minority language was valued the same way as the majority language.

8. Be proud of the minority language and culture and make sure the children’s friends have a taste of it too. I used to make a gingerbread house for each class room when the boys were in primary school and was delighted when one of the classmates, now 30 year old mother, stopped me in the street and asked for the recipe.

Corey: We’d be delighted if you’d like to share any additional thoughts, tips, advice and perspective with us!

Marjukka: The most important thing is to enjoy your children and do not become anxious. Bilingualism is not a static phenomenon and there are very few absolutely balanced bilinguals. Aim high but be flexible and accept that you may not reach the goals you first set out for. And as well as being proud of your own language and culture be equally proud and positive of the language and the culture of the country where you now live. Children will quickly sense if there is conflict between the two cultures in the family.

To learn more about Multilingual Matters and/or to contact Marjukka, visit: www.multilingual-matters.com. While there, make sure to check out the Bilingual Family Newsletter, which is edited by Marjukka and her son Sami Grover: www.bilingualfamilynewsletter.com.
What does a family do when they can’t find the bilingual resources they need? They start a publishing house and call it Multilingual Matters!

Looking for a printed newsletter just for you? Then make sure to check out: www.bilingualfamilynewsletter.com today and subscribe!

This exciting quarterly publication, now in its 23rd year, is designed to help all those families who, for various reasons, are in a situation where they can give their children (and themselves) the advantages of being bi- or multi-lingual. The newsletter publishes short informative articles on current thoughts on language learning, bilingualism, biculturalism, mother tongue, schools, etc. It also publishes descriptions of how individual families have coped in their individual situations, problems encountered and how these were overcome. Readership: mixed marriage families; expatriate families in embassies, schools, contract work etc.; immigrant families; students of language learning; researchers in field of bilingualism. If you enter a subscription, you will be provided with a password giving you free access to the archive of back issues. ISSN 0952-4096, one year subscription: GBP12.50/US$22.00/Euro 20.00. www.bilingualfamilynewsletter.com.
Books for Parents

A Parents’ and Teachers’ Guide to Bilingualism
By Colin Baker

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

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

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

Books for Reference

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

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

Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, by Colin Baker

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

Visit Multilingual Matters: www.multilingual-matters.com
20% off all books!
Practicing the One-Person-One-Language method and living in a country with a third language? Wonderful! Suzanne gives you her top tips for how to succeed.
The one-person-one language strategy (OPOL) is well known as a way to establish two languages, by each person speaking only their language to their children. But what happens when you have a third language in the family? OPOL+1, or trilingualism by default. When our first child, Marc, was born in 1997 I only spoke English to him and my husband spoke French and we tried to follow the OPOL strategy. But Marc also was hearing Hungarian, Arabic, Tagalog (from a babysitter), and the Swiss German dialect, as we moved from country to country for my husband’s work. We moved to Switzerland when Marc was two years old, and he was looked after by a Swiss chidminder in the mornings. At age three he hardly spoke a word in either language, although he understood all of them. Thankfully he did speak later on and was able to switch from language to language with ease.

OPOL+1 is when the family emphasis is on the two parental languages and the third is either an external language (i.e. used mainly outside the home) or used as a *lingua franca*. The third language often remains a verbal language, but has a high value as a language to communicate with the outside world or with certain people. OPOL+1 might apply to a mixed-language couple who live in a country where a third language is used, or a couple with two different languages might use a third language to communicate together. Some bilingual families employ or have daycare or schooling in a third language too. Whatever the language-mix the issues of trilingualism are often common. The OPOL+1 trilingual families that I have studied reported the following common points.

Families report that one language is stronger and more developed than the other two, which is usually the mother’s in the early years, followed by the father’s language later on, and a swing to dominance of the school language around age five or six.

One language may become dormant or passive. This can be temporary, for example while a child is learning to read or write in one language. But if it continues it may be a sign that you need to practice that language more.

Language will be linked not only to a person but also to a place or time. So a young child will 'label' a language 'Mummy’s', or 'Papa’s' or 'School'. An older child can understand proper language names, such as ‘Spanish’ but will still need to mentally file a language for a certain situation.

Young trilingual children may take more time to sort out which language belongs to which person and consequently may speak later or have some minor speech problems, which are usually resolved with time and practice.

Trilingual children learn to switch fast, to be sensitive to language changes and adapt likewise. Their parents are usually bilingual or trilingual and show a great example.

The family needs to make it clear who speaks each language and to have a strong links of culture and heritage. This is most important in the early years of language acquisition.

Some families mix all three languages, while others decide to have a distinct language separation. This depends on the parent’s language-patterns and their understanding or acceptance of languages in the home. Generally language separation is better in the early years and after age six children can mix languages or choose which language they speak.

All in all OPOL+1 can and does work for many families. It may be a short-term language solution in a period of transition or become the natural language pattern of a family. With a little patience and understanding the three languages can find their place in the child’s mind and allow him or her full communication with both parents and the outside world.
Multilingualism is a very common phenomenon in the world. Some children already have exposure to two (or even more) languages before going to school, but many others learn to speak one language at home and have their first contact with other languages at school. This article is about the second situation, the situation in which children ‘discover’ a new language when they go to school. The school language can also be the community language, and the child’s first language may be spoken by very few people in the community. This is a very common situation in the case of immigrants. In other cases, the child’s first language may also be the community language and most schools have the child’s first language as the language of instruction, but the child goes to a ‘different’ school. This could be the case of English schools in non-English speaking countries and also schools in many other ‘foreign languages’ such as German, French or Spanish. Apart from these situations there may be many others involving two or more languages. In many cases, even if the home and the school language are the same, the curriculum includes courses in other languages. The languages taught at school either as languages of instruction or school subjects can be introduced at different ages and there can be differences in intensity regarding the number of teaching hours.

Learning languages and becoming multilingual provides many opportunities in life. Multilinguals have more access than monolinguals to the information in different languages and have the opportunity to learn from different cultures and to understand these cultures. Multilingualism can also provide the opportunity to integrate in a specific community. Multilinguals are more likely to become members of a community even if they originally belong to a different one. Acquiring and using different languages can also have a positive effect on the children’s cognitive development and it can even have a positive effect by slowing down cognitive decline in the later stages of life. Speakers of languages of wider communication such as English also miss many opportunities if they remain monolingual.
Learning languages is challenging in all situations, also in educational contexts. There are many factors affecting language learning. Some of these factors are individual such as aptitude, age, motivation or some personality traits. Other factors are related to the context where learning takes place, and they include the use of different languages in the community, the characteristics of the school or the socioeconomic status. Here we are only going to focus on a few of these factors. We are going to do this by looking at some statements about becoming multilingual at school.

1) **It is always a problem to have a different language at school.** This statement is not true. It is important to develop the language or languages spoken at home but there are many children who learn another language when they go to school, and they have no problem with their general progress there. When children speak a well-spread language and they have the possibility of developing this language, the use of a different school language is in general terms very successful. There can be more problems when the home language is not valued and used in the community and when the child cannot develop this language or has no opportunities to acquire literacy skills. Many children in North America, Europe and other parts of the world attend immersion programs and they are very successful in developing their home language and one or two more languages. For example, for over 50% of schoolchildren in the Basque Country (Spain) the language of instruction is Basque, a minority language only spoken by 29% of the population. Research shows that children taught through Basque who also study Spanish as a school subject obtain better results in Basque and in academic achievement than children with Spanish as the only language of instruction. What is more interesting is that all children acquire the same level of Spanish even if they only study Spanish as a school subject. In this context, all children are exposed to Spanish, and there is no risk about its development even if they have Basque as the main language of instruction at school.

2) **Children learn languages faster.** This is a widespread belief which is not necessarily true. Children and adults alike need a lot of exposure to the target language in order to learn it. When a whole family moves to a different country it is quite common to find situations in which children speak the language of the host country better than their parents. In fact, in many cases children help their parents when they have to use the language. Why does this happen? First, it is important to consider that the conditions and attitudes of adults and children are completely different. In the case of immigrant families, while young children spend many hours at school immersed in the second language, their parents have very little interaction in the second language at work or in their social life. Children usually have more opportunities to learn the second language and they can also be more motivated. Some researchers also think that children can get to a higher level in different areas of language proficiency including pronunciation. But, do younger children learn faster than older children? This is not the case when learning a foreign language at school as a subject. When elementary and secondary school children receive the same number of hours of instruction in a foreign language, older learners progress faster. High school children progress faster learning foreign languages and learning other subjects. In countries like Spain it is very popular to start teaching English as a foreign language from a very early age, but if children only have a few lessons per week and no additional contact outside the classroom their progress is quite slow. When these programs are followed up by using English as the language of instruction for some subjects progress is faster.

3) **It is not possible to become a native speaker of many languages.** It is not impossible, but it is difficult to become a native speaker of many languages. The basic question here is ‘what is a native speaker’? We usually think about an ideal bilingual or multilingual who is fully competent in all situations in each of the languages s/he speaks. Do these people exist? Do you know somebody who can speak and write in three or four languages about anything (an informal chat with friends, writing a report or a formal letter, making a formal complaint…)? There are many people who can do these things and many others in several languages, but in most cases they will have a foreign accent in some of the languages they speak and they may also have a more limited vocabulary or even some minor mistakes in grammar. Are they a failure because they are not perfect multilinguals? Not at all. A multilingual is not the sum of several ‘perfect’ monolingual speakers. A multilingual person is another type of speaker who has advantages over monolinguals because s/he can communicate in different languages. In order to be very good in a triathlon race it is necessary to be a very good swimmer, a very good cyclist and a very good runner, but just by being the best runner one cannot win the race.
Triathletes need to be good at the three sports and need to know how to preserve their energy for the different stages. A multilingual speaker needs to be good at communicating in the different languages but because a multilingual speaker is different from a monolingual we cannot just focus on one of the languages, we need to see the multilingual speaker as a whole.

4) The more languages you know the easier it is to learn other languages. This is a common belief which is in general true. Most research on the effect of bilingualism on third language acquisition shows that bilinguals have advantages over monolinguals when learning an additional language. Research results indicate that bilinguals progress faster than monolinguals when learning a third language. This advantage is reflected in higher scores in oral and written tests. Why is there an advantage?

Bilingual children can develop a higher level of metalinguistic awareness; that is, they tend to understand better the way languages work, and this advantage is useful when learning an additional language. Moreover, bilingual children already know two languages and they can relate the new words, sounds or structures they learn in a new language to the languages they already know. This use of other languages is more common when the languages are similar to each other than when the languages are completely different. Bilinguals also tend to have better communicative skills because they have to switch languages when talking to different speakers. Do all bilinguals have advantages? Although in general, bilinguals have advantages over monolinguals when learning an additional language, some children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not show these advantages.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the discussion of these statements is that it is difficult to generalize on some issues and that it is necessary to analyse the specific situation in which language learning takes place. Not all children are in the same situation, and although research studies show some trends, it is important to be careful about general statements.

How can teachers and parents help?

Schools provide good opportunities for becoming multilingual but language learners also face many challenges. How can teachers and parents foster multilingualism? Teachers and parents have different roles and their contribution is crucial for the development of multilingualism. They can contribute:

1) To develop a positive attitude towards multilingualism. They can highlight the value of knowing and using different languages. Parents’ and teachers’ own attitudes towards other languages can be very influential.

2) To develop a positive attitude towards multiculturalism. Teachers and parents can help
to make the child aware that there are different lifestyles, different cultures and different ways to do things and that cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity. To get to know more about other cultures has to be a very important part of education both at home and at school.

3) To motivate children so that they enjoy the school activities and they also enjoy practicing different languages. This can be done by preparing activities which are motivating and at the same time useful at school and by following-up these activities at home. It is not necessary for parents to speak the second language to encourage their children to listen to songs or stories in the second language.

4) To help children by setting realistic goals for language learning and by looking at multilingual proficiency as a whole and not only at monolingual models. The goal should be to communicate in different languages according to the need to use these languages and not to compare them to ideal native speakers.

5) To provide opportunities to use the languages in real-life situations. This can be done in many ways: organizing activities at school with speakers of the different languages, travelling to other countries, or contacting other children on the Internet, etc.

The role of schools in developing multilingualism is very important, and the cooperation between parents and teachers is necessary to use the opportunities provided by education. Children spend many years at school to learn important things for their lives. Becoming multilingual should certainly be one of them.

Further Reading


“...And They Lived Happily Ever After”

Isn’t that how every child’s story should end?

ColorinColorado.org, the first major, comprehensive bilingual site for parents and educators of Latino ELL children, is working with Multilingual Living Magazine to provide families around the world with tips on encouraging language learning in your home! Although primarily aimed toward Spanish-speaking children learning English, these tips are useful no matter what language you are encouraging in your home.

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

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

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

Look for ColorinColorado’s tips in each Multilingual Living Magazine!
Find ways to read, write, and tell stories together with your child. Always applaud your young reader and beginning story writer! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

- **Tell family tales.**
  Children love to hear stories about their family. Talk about a funny thing that happened when you were young.

- **Create a writing toolbox.**
  Fill a box with drawing and writing materials. Find opportunities for your child to write, such as the shopping list, thank you notes, or birthday cards.

- **Be your child’s #1 fan.**
  Ask your child to read aloud what he or she has written for school. Be an enthusiastic listener.

- **One more time with feeling.**
  When your child has sounded out an unfamiliar word, have him or her re-read that sentence. Often kids are so busy figuring out a word they lose the meaning of what they’ve just read.

- **Create a book together.**
  Fold pieces of paper in half and staple them to make a book. Ask your child to write sentences on each page and add his or her own illustrations.

- **Do storytelling on the go.**
  Take turns adding to a story the two of you make up while riding in a car or bus. Try making the story funny or spooky.

- **Point out the relationship between words.**
  Explain how related words have similar spellings and meanings. Show how a word like knowledge, for example, relates to a word like know.

- **Use a writing checklist.**
  Have your child create a writing checklist with reminders such as, “Do all of my sentences start with a capital? Yes/No.”

- **Quick, quick.**
  Use new words your child has learned in lively flash card or computer drills. Sometimes these help kids automatically recognize and read words, especially those that are used frequently.
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I grew up talking to my parents in Korean and spoke French with my friends at school. For me, it was the most natural thing in the world. And I thought it would be the same for my children.

It’s hard. Much harder than I thought it would be. And daunting and exhausting at times. The feelings of failure, the responsibility. How my children can fully grasp long and complicated sentences in Korean yet are unable or reluctant to use the language. The books, the DVDs, the years slipping by and still no word. No progress. The embarrassment when friends and family look inquiringly, sometimes disapprovingly. And the guilt every time my sons ask why leaves fall off the trees, and I can only explain it in French.

Sean and Will are almost 5 now and have been going to a Korean school every Wednesday afternoon since last September. Our family also attend a Korean church on Sundays. My husband and I thought that hearing and being surrounded by other children who are fluent in Korean would encourage our sons to develop new friendships and interests and eventually help them overcome the language barrier. But now the first thing they ask when they meet someone for the first time is what language he or she speaks. If it’s Korean, they let out an audible sigh and I can sense their frustration and disappointment, the fear of inadequacy. And judgment.

Some days I want to give up. I really do. I look at my boys and I wonder. Why is it so important? Do I really want them to speak both French and Korean? What if they don’t, would it even matter? The truth is, I know it does. And it will. Not because of what people might think or say. Not because I want them to be open-minded, confident and tolerant. Or have long conversations with their grandfather over the phone. But because it is who they are. And I’ve learned from my own experience that there’s nothing more valuable than one’s sense of identity. Of belonging.

So we hang in there. We try to be consistent, find new strategies every day and use every opportunity to teach our sons new Korean words. Because every word counts. Some days are harder than others. We are sick, tired or exasperated. And the results may not be visible over a long period of time.

But we just need to remind ourselves why, and the how just follows.

Irene Nam, the daughter of first born Korean parents, grew up and lives in France where she’s raising her twin boys. Irene is a contributing writer for Bilingual/Bicultural Family Network and can also be found at Blogging Baby. You can read more about her family on her personal blog irenenam.squarespace.com.
Mai Loc is a 40-year-old photographer who also supports himself by working as a tour guide at Sao Mai Hotel in Nha Trang, Vietnam. Nha Trang is a tourist destination 274 miles north of Ho Chi Minh City and is known for its nice but crowded beaches. Mai Loc is a short man with dark hair and bright brown eyes that light up as he happily talks about his photos. The story of how he became a photographer is a compelling one and begins in 1995 when he was working as a cyclo driver in Nha Trang. Cyclo drivers provide cheap transportation for locals and tourists all over Vietnam and pedal bicycles with carriages attached to carry 1-2 people. One day in 1995, Gunnar Simonsen and Eva W. Mellquist, a Norwegian couple vacationing in Vietnam, took a cyclo ride with Mai Loc. The couple found out that Loc was learning English and were so impressed by his motivation to educate himself that they promised to pay for future English classes. The couple formed a friendship with Loc, kept in touch with him and returned to visit him in 1996 and 1997. While attending Loc’s wedding, Simonsen and Mellquist gave him his first camera. His fluency in English allowed him to quit cyclo driving and start his own tour business, while the camera provided him with his first photography experiences. Eventually he saved up money for a good camera, and, with the encouragement of friends, began to market his photography.

Mai Loc served as a guide to my husband who was
studying traditional bamboo coracle building techniques in
Vietnam. Loc took us to visit traditional boat builders in Nha Trang
and served as a translator. It was during this time that I asked if I
could interview him. Although Loc cannot support his family solely
through photography, he considers himself a success because he
loves both working as a tour guide and photographing the natural
beauty of his country. The following interview took place on
September 16, 2006 in Nha Trang as I listened to Mai Loc’s life story
over a cup of iced café sua nam (coffee with condensed milk).

**Alice Driver:** What kind of work did you do before you were a cyclo
driver?

**Mai Loc:** As a little boy, around 12 years old, I worked selling
cigarettes outside the train station. Then from 1985 to 1989 I
worked as a smuggler, mainly smuggling coffee. In 1989 I went
bankrupt and took a job searching for gold in the mountains 35km
east of Saigon near Nam Cat Tien National Park. It was a horrible
nightmare. A lot of people got malaria or were buried alive in the
mountain. Most of them had no identity cards. While digging gold
I got malaria and was very sick for 3 months. After this I became a

**Driver:** Why did you decide to learn English?

**Loc:** I wanted to learn English for fun. It is a useful language.

**Driver:** You have an 8-year-old son and a 2-month-old
daughter. Are they learning English?

**Loc:** I hope that in the future, when they are older, they can learn
English.

**Driver:** In March of 1995 a Norwegian couple, Gunnar Simonsen
and Eva W. Mellquist took a cyclo ride with you. How did your
relationship with them develop?

**Loc:** I spoke a little English, and they encouraged me to keep
learning. They gave me energy and advice, and when they left
Vietnam they gave me a ring. Whenever I looked at that ring I felt
encouraged. In 1996 they came back to visit me, and in 1997 they attended my wedding. They gave me a solar-powered Canon camera as a wedding gift.

**Driver:** And your career in photography began with that solar camera?

**Loc:** From that camera I learned to take photos. In 1998, just before Gunnar died of a terminal illness, he sent me $6,000 to start my own life. I started a motor taxi tour guide business. Whatever I saw that was beautiful in my eyes, I decided I should try to take a photo. Friends saw my photos and encouraged me to make postcards and enter photo contests. In 2002, when Eva returned, she was surprised and glad with my success. As a present I gave her some of my photos. Back in Norway Eva presented the photos to some galleries, and they wanted me to come over for a show. It is very hard to get a visa in Vietnam, and it took many years to get my visa. In 2006 the Nordiclight Photo Festival in Kristiansund, Norway invited me to attend, and with the support of the Norway photography association and government officials I finally got a visa. I went from August 17 to September 13, 2006. I still don’t believe I went to Norway.

**Driver:** How would you describe your relationship with Eva and Gunnar?

**Loc:** I call them my parents. Eva is very proud of me like my mother. Our dream was that I could come and sit with Gunnar in Norway, and I finally got to come and visit his tomb in 2006.

**Driver:** Your trip to Norway was your first travel experience outside of Vietnam?
Loc: Yes, I remember every detail. Everybody loved me, and it was very nice. I have lived through many bad situations, but I could not control my tears in Norway. I cried several times because of happiness. Everything in Europe was new to me. I always had my camera with me. In Norway I gave a lecture. I talked with people about Vietnam and the power of love. I hope that one day the world will know peace. In Norway for the first time in my life I bought five pieces of paper, one envelope and one pen for $7.

Driver: What motivates you as a photographer?
Loc: People - how they live, how they smile - that is what interests me as a photographer.

Driver: Do you want to travel more as a photographer?
Loc: I hope so; that is my dream.

Driver: Do you have any memories of the Vietnam War?
Loc: I was born on September 24, 1966 in Duc My, a small town on the way to the central highlands located on highway 26. When I was a little boy some of the government soldiers taught me to use an M-16. My mother had a canteen inside the military training center in town, and my father was a South Vietnamese soldier. Sometimes I saw big trucks on highway 26 carrying dead bodies home. Some things you need to remember and some things you need to forget to keep going on.
Alice Driver returned from a year of studies at the University of Valladolid in Spain in June of 2006, got married mid-July and left for Vietnam with her husband Isaac on July 29. Isaac and Alice are traveling to Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, New Zealand (Tokelau), Peru and Ecuador as Isaac works and studies with indigenous boat builders (www.savantsofthesea.com). When she returns to the US next year she will finish her Masters degree in Hispanic Studies at the University of Kentucky. Her first academic article appears in the Winter 2007 issue of Romance Quarterly.

**Driver:** What was your family life like as a child?
**Loc:** I was raised by my mother. She had one shirt and one pair of pants. When she washed them she had to wear a blanket. I have four sisters and know what a hard life it is to raise five children. When I was young I lost my childhood. My father had four different wives and 16 children.

**Driver:** How is your daily life now?
**Loc:** When I don’t take tourists out, I work for a hotel. I get my photos from daily life. I also look after my wife, the two children and my mother.

**Driver:** What aspects of Vietnamese culture are important to you?
**Loc:** Wrinkles are experience in life. This generation takes care of the next generation: that is how we live in Vietnam. In Europe they put the old people in homes.

**Driver:** What advice would you give to tourists coming to Vietnam?
**Loc:** It is very important for tourists to read a book about the history and culture of Vietnam. Many tourists don’t do this and don’t care. They carry travel guides like Bibles, only looking for cheap hotels. Tourists are looking for pleasure. It is very important that you come here with a real heart to learn something, to exchange something about the culture.

For more information on Mai Loc and his photography visit his website at [www.mailoc.net](http://www.mailoc.net) or send him an e-mail at [mai_loc@hotmail.com](mailto:mai_loc@hotmail.com)
Your Cultural Identity Changes As Your Child Grows

By Harriet Cannon
As you strategize how to best teach your infant and young child birth to 5 years your languages and cultures, have you thought about the effect raising children has on your cultural identity? In the counseling profession we say most people have a sound sense of their adult identity by the late twenties. When you are a bicultural couple, there are some extras to integrate in your identity as a couple but you can maintain fairly separate cultural identities until the birth of your first child.

The birth of your first child brings challenges out into the open: which language(s) dominate the home, which cultural practices take precedence, and how will you and your spouse form a multicultural family that embraces diversity? As much as many of us would like to believe that we can live the metaphor of the “salad bowl” where each language group and culture maintain their separate identity, the reality is the dressing in the salad bowl – your mixed cultural household- will flavor all the fruits and vegetables changing their color and texture. No distinct culture and language will stay pure when living side by side in a family. In the US, the prevalence of “Spanglish” with its many varieties is a good example of cultural linguistic blending. The earlier in your child’s life you recognize that it is in everyone’s best interest to invite yourself to some blending identity as Japanese-American, Spanish-American, American-South African, the more likely you are to form a positive cultural bond with your child which will give your child permission to experiment freely with his/her emerging American-Spanish, Chinese-Italian-American identity. The dominant culture of the country in which you now live will become your child’s dominant cultural identity influence and there is no way to prevent it. For strong, loving lifetime attachments with your children, you have to work WITH the dominant culture in how you identify yourself.

Does preparing for changes in your cultural identity sound premature when your child is a baby? Not if you recognize as a parent the feeling you impart to your child about language and culture is far stronger than what you actually say. Young children live in the land of intuition because they lack the vocabulary to be articulate. “Mom and Dad didn’t grow up here but they think it is OK to be from here so I’m OK.” When you stay non judgmental (and mean it) about the positive things in the dominant culture, you allow your child to be proud of his/her blend of culture by modeling it.

It is true as you raise your son or daughter, you will revisit cultural memories of your childhood and if you are honest and self aware, you will acknowledge the pull of loyalty to repeat with your child the cultural experiences which were important in your childhood. Some things you can do with your children and some things you will have to grieve as lost possibilities. What places do you wish you could show your child in these first years of his/her life? Who do you miss seeing: aunts, uncles, parents and school friends who now have children your child’s age in a far-away place? Are you feeling left out of shared cultural experiences that would embrace your child in your native land? Make a strategy with your spouse to find a way to fold some of your REALLY important memories and experiences into your child’s early life and be consistent just as you are with language training.

It is normal to have times when you may feel angry or depressed about the strength of the dominant culture’s influence on your child even if you speak your native language exclusively at home. Take heart, talk to your spouse about the support each of you needs to have a balanced, honest approach to opening your heart to your own emerging biculturalism in the way you have opened to bilingualism. Find some other parents to talk with as you come to understand the ways you are changing how you think of yourself as Chinese or Austrian or Turkish. The first 5 years of your child’s life are a gentle nudge into how your cultural identity will have to shift to bridge the gap between your child’s world and the dominant country’s cultural world as you help her/him develop his/her own multicultural identity. Give yourself plenty of credit for being the new pioneers. You are on the cutting edge of the wave of multicultural families in this world of global mobility and multicultural appreciation.

Harriet Cannon, M.C., LMFT 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 her website at www.harrietcannon.com, if you have a question for Harriet, send it to her at: harriet@harrietcannon.com
Multicultural Mélange
By Alice Lapuerta
“Did you just say your child is learning three languages at the same time?!” incredulous stare. She might as well have added, “But why?!”

“Uh, yes. We didn’t plan it. It just happened.” I sound apologetic and feel a strong need to explain myself. “My husband’s native language is Spanish, mine is German and we’ve always communicated in English. So, our kids hear three languages at home all the time. We’re very used to it by now and it’s going very well.”

She is evidently speechless because she just looks at me, shaking her head. End of conversation. Something tells me that this didn’t go too well. I shrug it off.

**Encounters like that are not uncommon.** I’m getting used to them. I’ve also had many positive responses like, “What a great asset for your children,” or, “How wonderful!” or “What a fantastic way to raise your child.” We’ve had a lot of support from people. But we do get the incredulous, often unspoken “are-you-totally-nuts-to-be-speaking-so-many-languages-to-your-poor-children” as well, alas.

**People react in all sorts of other interesting ways.**

“I am going to speak to her in English from now on,” announced my daughter’s dancing teacher said one day, with a speculative look in her eyes.

“And why?” I asked, bewildered.

“To see whether she understands me better in English.”

“Do you want me to speak English with you?” she turns to my daughter, with a strong German accent. My daughter looks at her like she just came from Mars.

“Naaah,” she replies, and giggles.

“It’s just that she is used to hearing you speak German all the time, and I think you should just keep sticking to German,” I explain. Sometimes people seem to want her to show off. They ask her to perform.

“Say something in Spanish or English!” they demand. In other words: prove to us that you can speak this language! Usually my little girl just ignores their demands. I think she is right.

“She doesn’t want to speak Spanish right now,” I say. “And anyway, she is used to speaking Spanish only with her Papi.” People don’t always seem to understand this. Sometimes she obliges, and counts in clear, succinct Spanish from one to ten.

“One, dos, tres … ”

“Not bad,” they reply grudgingly.

“Excellent, darling,” I whisper.
Red Bamboo Lane

By Rachel Scollon

Regreting the lost opportunity of childhood bilingualism
I stood at the back of the room, my elbows against the cool concrete wall, trying to match my inflections to those carried by the rest of the voices in the room. “School bag,” shu bao, two syllables on the same high, level pitch. “There are, in the,” li you, falling then rising again, but the second syllable falling farther than the first. My voice was lower than the others’; trying to follow them, I sounded to myself terribly shrill.

At the front of the room the teacher, a trim, round-faced woman of neat blouse and skirt and ferocious expression, held the square paperbacked text in one hand and directed with the other, in large gestures of great clarity and definition. When her students’ conduct was not to her liking, she called them to the front of the room, one by one, to stretch their cheeks between her finger and thumb. Then back they went to their seats to hold their satchels above their heads until their arms shook from the strain.

The sea of shaking satchels was just about at chin level, for me, my classmates’ heads reaching to somewhere around my waist. I looked across in bemusement at the teacher. I’d not understood her order, but the results were, if depressing, still interesting. I glanced sideways at my brother, who, as usual, provided no real guidance. I looked at our own book bags, not stiff, rectangular satchels, but nylon backpacks from L. L. Bean. Mine had never held a rubber ball. Just months before, it had shielded geology and history books from wet, Southeast Alaskan snow. Now it threatened to mold in the damp Taiwanese heat. Should I hold it up above my head? No, that would be ludicrous. I sat down.

The desk I shared with my brother was an inch or two taller than the others in the room, but it still didn’t clear my knees. The chair was short. When I sat on it, my thighs and torso jackknifed, and the hard wood bruised the hinge. I propped my diary on my knees, resting it against the shelf of the desk, and wrote in it how unbearable it all was.

Our route to school went down from the house past fields heaped with crumpled sheets of plastic foam with footprints cut out. The plastic was mostly in bright colors, much the colors of what I was wearing to school: track shorts, too short and too pink; shirt, too pink, blue, and billowy and, tucked into my shorts, ridiculous.

I thought the foul reek of our neighborhood derived from the manufacture of these sheets, that flip-flops were cut out in the little factories neighboring our house and shipped off from there to find their ways to the bottom of people’s feet. It was otherwise, my dad
found out later: the flip-flops were made elsewhere, and the plastic sheets in the fields by our house, sitting crumpled there with vines of morning glory and small, sweet tomatoes creeping over them, were waiting to be melted down (yielding that nauseating smell) and made into something else.

There was a gate at the bottom of the hill, bearing the name of our street: Red Bamboo Lane, three of the first words I learned to write in Chinese. And then a big road, and across it the path went along past some pigpens, for a space short enough that you always tried to make it through without drawing breath, but long enough that you always failed in the end, gasping in a huge breath of bad air just before you made it to the rice fields on the other side. Then there was the place where the dead cat hung rotting from the tree, a bundle of spirit money around its neck to sustain it in the afterlife, and then the path came out by the middle school, on the edge of the town.

I went slowly past the middle school gate, looking in at the kids playing basketball or loitering in the courtyard. The girls my size wore strange bag-like outfits, not at all appealing, but normal, standard. What would it have been like in there, I always wondered, had my mother managed to talk me in?

But the authorities said if we didn’t know the language we must start at the beginning, so while I could look wistfully through the middle school gate, I had to keep going on around the corner to the elementary school, up the stairs and along the open corridor to my first grade classroom, where I sat with my knees drawn up nearly to my chin. At the door and windows, crowds of kids from other grades peeked in. “Migolan, Migolan!” they said, pointing. At both of us, but mostly at me, a big pink blob in a scatter of white and navy blue. Even my brother was still small enough for the elementary school uniform.

I asked my parents what Migolan meant. “Must be Taiwanese for Meiguoren,” they said.

Meiguoren, a person from America, was what my textbook said I should call myself. Not the text about the book bags but the one I’d brought from home, Beginning Chinese, by John DeFrancis. I studied it quite eagerly, at first. I thought it held the clue to conversation. The four tones of Mandarin were diagrammed there, the high and level first tone, rising second, dipping third, falling fourth. The same tones my teacher read out in her clear, commanding voice, there at the front of the room, for the students before her to chorus back. Some of the words, even, were the same. There was, I thought, a correspondence between book and world.

But it all proved too difficult for me. I studied, and I eavesdropped, but not a word did I understand. Our dad sent us to buy beer, along the lane to the neighborhood store with the fly-engrusted sticky paper, next to the lowing ox in its wood-slat pen, and along the way were the kids, both human and goat, the human ones saying, “Migolan, Migolan.” At the store, I pointed at the beer in the little glass-fronted refrigerator, then held out money, silently.

It made me uneasy, this beer-buying. At home, I was seven years off legal beer-buying age. But this was Taichung County, and Alaskan laws did not apply. Not laws for alcohol purchase, nor for truancy either, I soon realized. Could Taiwan possibly have laws regarding foreign nationals’ attendance at school? Surely not.
I later learned I was mistaken—foreign nationals were barred from Taiwan’s schools altogether, not just from years above first grade. The village school authorities’ vigilance as to our grade level was misplaced; they ought not to have let us in at all.

But that knowledge was a decade in coming. In the meantime, I just declared to my parents I was no longer going to school, and stayed home writing in my diary admonishments to study, and chastisements for not doing so. Instead of the geometry and Mandarin I felt I really should attend to, I read.

All of Jane Austen, I read that year, then The Tempest, Romeo and Juliet, Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre, Villette, Shirley, Agnes Grey, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Silas Marner, Oliver Twist, Great Expectations, Moby Dick, War and Peace: impediments to my education, all, or so at least I felt at the time.

And so I returned to Alaska without more than a few words of Mandarin, a dismal failure. But one’s faults perhaps need not be forever unremedied. I applied by early decision to one of the few liberal arts colleges in the nation with a good strong four-year Chinese curriculum.

And went to China, my sophomore year, on a semester abroad.

This is when I realized. I’d been studying standard Mandarin intensively for a year and a half, had a good grasp of basic grammar and the most commonly-used vocabulary, and in Kunming, Yunnan Province, I couldn’t understand a word anyone was saying.

This was because they were not speaking standard Mandarin. It was Southwest Mandarin, in Kunming, so different from the standard as to be unintelligible, not only to me, the foreign student, but to people from other parts of China.

I thought back. In Taiwan, when I was fourteen and in first grade, that little teacher of mine was drilling my classmates on basic pronunciation. My classmates, six years old, were embarking on the study of a new language. They were about to become bilingual.

Growing up in the US, one tends to take monolingualism as the universal standard. It takes a while for knowledge of some other condition of mind to sink in.

But monolingualism is no default condition. People have always had to communicate with people in different dialectal states, and even people from so far away as to speak a language unrelated altogether. The rise of the nation-state has introduced a peculiar division between those countries rendered all but uniformly monolingual (e.g., the US) and those in which almost everyone is bi- or multilingual (e.g., Taiwan, China), but absent modern political necessity, most people would fall somewhere between being able to talk only to people in their own village and being competent to communicate with all and sundry, regardless of which of nine or ten languages they might happen to speak.

Myself, I feel impoverished. Not only did I not get to wear a fetching school uniform, I ended up only semicompetent in my second language. Ah, well. I don’t blame myself. I was just raised in the wrong place and wrong time.

Rachel Scollon is a monolingual English speaker with a sadly adulterated vocabulary. She lives in Seattle, Washington, USA, where she likes to eavesdrop on Chinese speakers in grocery stores.
Still trilingual at ten: Livia’s multilingual journey

By Jean-Marc Dewaele
When I wrote my first article on my daughter Livia’s trilingualism in 2000, she was three years old, and she had managed to acquire active knowledge of English, Dutch and French, as well as a passive knowledge of Urdu. I described the relief I felt as a father that the research on early multilingualism was right after all: a child who is continuously exposed to several languages develops competence in all these languages. Moreover, this multilingualism from birth does not result in any retardation in linguistic or cognitive development and several distinct linguistic systems emerge.

Seven years on, I continue to be amazed by Livia’s multilingual repertoire. Although through lack of exposure to Urdu, she has lost it completely, she remains highly fluent and sounds native-like in her other three languages. This does not mean that she is equally strong in her languages or that production in the three languages is equally effortless. The wider environment is much more powerful than anything parents can do at home. She goes to an English school, is surrounded by English-speaking friends, watches English films, reads English books, hence the logical and inevitable dominance of English. It is her social language and also her “inner” language. She used to speak English to her dolls, now she still mutters in English when displeased about something.

The absence of a large enough peer-group of French and Dutch speakers means that, although she is perfectly able to interact with monolingual French and Dutch-speaking Belgian friends at her grandparents’ home in Belgium, her French and Dutch are more stilted. My wife and I are her main sources of input for Dutch and French, and what 10 year-old wants to sound like her parents?! In other words, she can sound more “sophisticated” in English, she can tell jokes better in that language, and she can express emotions, sarcasm and irony in English better than she can in French or Dutch. It does not mean that she is unable to understand jokes, emotions, irony or sarcasm in French and Dutch, on the contrary: she reacts appropriately when I read her beautifully sarcastic passages of Alexandre Dumas’ Trois Mousquetaires (which contains a lot of vocabulary and grammatical forms that are unfamiliar to her) and the same applies to my wife’s reading of children’s novels in Dutch. However, she is unlikely to produce that kind of discourse herself in French or Dutch, and she would typically switch to English when talking to us about something emotional or when telling a humorous story or a joke. For example, we went to see the film Crusade in Jeans in Bruges during the Christmas break. The film, based on a Dutch novel, is in English. We saw a version dubbed in Dutch and Livia was thrilled by it. Yet, afterwards she preferred to discuss the emotional issues in English.

This also shows why we’ve relaxed the rule of one person – one language. We still each address Livia in our own language but we allow her to answer back in English if she feels like it. We started allowing
English for discussion of school issues that were hard for her to translate, like reporting what had happened to her friends in class, what the teacher had said, and what someone else had answered. We felt it would be unreasonable to insist on her translating everything, especially because my wife and I are both fluent in English. We also wanted to avoid stifling Livia’s wish to express herself freely. By insisting too much on her using our languages, we feared we could create the opposite effect, namely a complete refusal to use the languages at all. However, allowing Livia to talk about certain topics in English inevitably opened the gate to English. Since most of her other activities happen in English, she reports everything in English, even the things that “happened” in French or Dutch. She dreams mostly in English and calculates in English. I still nudge her to speak French with me, but my wife is less insistent. I also realize that we often answer back in English, but typically in a code-switching mode. My wife and I typically code-switch a lot between Dutch and French before Livia’s birth, now our code-switching patterns are trilingual and it feels perfectly normal. The other crucial fact is that my wife and I have lived in London for 13 years now, and that English has become “our” language too. I would even say that I have become dominant in English as far as academic writing is concerned. It does not stop me making the odd embarrassing pronunciation mistake - to Livia’s great glee. The moment I open my mouth in English, I’m identified as an L2 user, which does not bother me at all. Having a trilingual child makes one realize how dynamic languages are. Livia’s proportion of utterances in English spoken at home typically peaks before a holiday. During the holiday we spend more time together, we might go to Belgium where she can speak French with her paternal grandparents; Dutch with her maternal grandmother, her aunts, uncles, and cousins; and Dutch with the friends in her grandparents’ neighbourhood. These friends are typically monolingual and Livia manages to cut the code-switching and stick to a monolingual language mode. All this input in Dutch and French pushes her preference for English down a little. However, as soon as she returns to school, the dominance of English establishes itself again. She stopped going to a weekly French class because she was not learning much and because of scheduling problems. My wife and I are teaching her to read in French and Dutch, and she started doing literacy papers in French for younger children.

She loves reading English novels (JK Rowling, Philip Pullman, Enid Blyton and Jacqueline Wilson are her favorites) and she greatly enjoys writing. Not surprisingly, she got the highest scores of her class for English in a national test called SATs (out-performing the monolingual English speakers). She is also passionate about theatre. She has been taking drama classes for four years and she has learned to project her voice, to articulate clearly and to overcome stagefright.

Her English sounds relatively posh (she picked it up in a private nursery and has kept it ever since), despite the fact that many children in her school speak a lower sociolect. She also avoids using stigmatized variants. In a funny episode, a Belgian friend wanted to show off his (very limited) knowledge of English, and uttered a really offensive four-letter word with a broad innocent smile. Livia was shocked and told him off. This was a taboo word, she explained, and she had some trouble accepting that the Belgian friend could be unaware of this. I personally thought the episode was really interesting. I have been studying the use of swearwords in foreign languages, and one of the findings is that these words never seem to be that offensive in a foreign language because they lack the strong emotional connotations of the equivalent words in the first language.

Livia is very happy to be trilingual but she does not see it as a particular achievement. Many of her friends come from immigrant families and they speak Polish, Portuguese, Turkish, Somali, Gujarati, Chinese and Lingala. She has a third language, but only adults may give her the odd compliment about it. She is of course delighted when someone thinks it is really interesting, such as Professor Marya Teutsch-Dwyer from St Cloud State University, Minnesota, who plans to interview her as a participant in her project on multilingual children, but there are many things she’s more proud about (her red belt in karate, her swimming skills, her patrol leadership in the scouts, and her winning the poetry and the novel-writing competitions at school).

In sum, now that Livia is ten, we realize that becoming trilingual from birth is not that hard, but that the difficulty lies in the maintenance and development of the three languages. It requires a constant investment on the part of the child and the parents to make sure that all languages are actively used and needed. Nothing linguistic is ever completely secured. Using a language is like paddling, the moment you interrupt your strokes, you will start losing speed, and after a while the current will push you gently against the riverbank, where you’ll remain stranded until you push yourself free and start paddling vigorously again.

To conclude, and referring to the previous metaphor, I believe that monolingualism is like being stranded, entrapped in reeds, while multilingualism is a kind of freedom through exertion!

Acknowledgement: I would like to thanks Dr. Charlotte Kemp for feedback on a previous version of this little paper.

\[\text{Don’t miss our interview with Dr. Dewaele from the May-June issue: www.biculturalfamily.org/may06/int_int_jean-marc dewaele.html}\]

\[\text{Dr. Jean-Marc Dewaele is Reader in French and Applied Linguistics at Birkbeck, University of London. He publishes on various aspects of second language production and the communication of emotion among multilinguals. He edited - with LiWei and Alex Housen - in 2002, the book Opportunities and Challenges of Bilingualism (Mouton De Gruyter) and, in 2003, the book Bilingualism: Basic Principles and Beyond (Multilingual Matters).}\]
“Where is the head, Carl?” I ask him in French. “Où est la tête?” And my little nephew grins at me and plants his sticky hand on my forehead. After countless renditions of “Tête, Épaules, Genoux et Pieds” (“Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes”), and other French songs about body parts, plus months of saying “Oui, la tête!” every single time he touched my face, it looks like he definitely understands this one word in French. One down, fifty thousand to go.

I’m an American who teaches beginning and intermediate French at Colorado State University and who tutors preschoolers in French. Recently married, I hope to raise my future children bilingually (even though my husband doesn’t speak French). My mother was also—briefly—a French teacher, and snippets of French run through my childhood memories—the record album of French songs I’d play over and over, reading the Ludwig Bemelman Madeline books and calling her “Mad-len” with a French accent instead of “Mad-uh-line;” my mother shaking her head and telling my misbehaving little brother and me, “vous êtes impossibles!” But I didn’t actually start studying French until my sophomore year of high school. I still speak French with an American accent (although I know how to pronounce individual sounds, my intonation betrays me) and get a little nervous talking to native speakers. On the other hand, I love speaking French, dream of traveling to francophone Africa, and do French crossword puzzles for fun. But just think what I’d be capable of if I had been learning French my whole life! That’s what I want to offer my children some day.

In the meantime, I have a wonderful opportunity to practice on another family member: my nephew. When my sister-in-law and her husband had a baby last year, I agreed to watch him once a week so that he wouldn’t have to spend so much time in daycare;
they also asked me if I'd be willing to speak French to him when we were together. That was an easy decision!

As I started babysitting Carl (at age three months), I realized that actually carrying out this decision wouldn't be so easy. First of all, I am by nature fairly quiet, more of an introvert. But with Carl, I felt like I should be speaking constantly to expose him to as much French as possible during the one day a week I spent with him, and this felt extremely awkward to me. I wasn't used to conversing with someone who could only make gurgling noises or blow raspberries in return! So I started narrating everything we did and labeling everything we saw, and eventually speaking French to this infant began to feel more natural. (It helped that his huge blue eyes always followed my fingers when I pointed, that he was always looking around, that he liked to touch my face when I talked and thus seemed to be paying close attention.)

In fact, ever since I started babysitting Carl, I find myself speaking French to every single baby I meet! What also helped was learning many more songs in French. Now when I get tired of talking (and of monitoring my own French very carefully so as to give him the best possible grammar and pronunciation to model) I just sing, sing, sing.

Another potential difficulty that exists for us is that I'm the only one in the family who speaks French. While Carl's mom had some French in high school and can read simple books to him and sing some songs, she can't say a lot to him on her own. Carl's dad majored in classics in college—which means he can use his knowledge of Latin to decode some of Carl's French books—but he doesn't have a background in French pronunciation. And the extended family—grandparents, great aunts and uncles, and my husband, his only uncle—doesn't know any French. So while Carl's parents are eager for him to be exposed to a second language, only Tatie ("auntie") Sarah will be able actually to communicate with him in it.

Finally, reinforcing the French will be a challenge for all of us. I only see him once or twice a week, and when it's a family gathering of course I'm speaking English with everyone else. I've left many books and CDs in French, including some audio books with accompanying picture books, at their house for Carl to look at and listen to when I'm not there. In another year or two, we'll get him DVDs and videos in French and probably some interactive CD-ROMs and toys like Leapfrog in French. And perhaps when he's older we can find (or create) a French play group for local francophone kids. But here in northern Colorado, there's little call for French and not a lot of people who speak it. This means that once Carl realizes that French is a different language from English and that no one else around him uses it, he may lose interest and see it as not important. On the other hand, we can all do our best to promote it—teaching him about francophone countries (and ideally traveling there), watching videos that make speaking French seem cool, introducing him to other francophone kids, singing French songs together, showing our excitement and approval when he says sentences in French. Besides, who knows? He might end up with cousins and siblings who can all speak French together, and in the meantime, this other language will be something special that he and his Tatie share.

As this bi-monthly column continues, I plan to write about what Carl and I do together, what he seems to understand, how he reacts to the different languages surrounding him, and his process of learning to talk. I'll share my strategies and techniques and also tell stories about what doesn't work, what frustrates us, and what makes us laugh. As a non-native speaker of the language I'm teaching him, and not his primary caregiver, I'm eager to figure out how to make this work and to see what happens on this journey to bilingualism!

Sarah Dodson-Knight of Lafayette, Colorado keeps a blog, Bringing up Baby Bilingual, about her experiences teaching French to children: babybilingual.blogspot.com.
Children love folktales and fables. With their simple characters and settings, as well as an enticing conflict early in the story, folktales immediately grab a reader’s attention. Recall *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, in which all three goats need to get to the other side of the bridge for food, but a hungry troll stands in their way. The stories develop quickly, and often obstacles seem insurmountable before, in the end, everything is resolved to our satisfaction. Good triumphs over evil.

The repetition and rhythm we see in stories such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* and *The Little Red Hen* and the *Grains of Wheat*, also are very appealing to children. And, of course, everyone loves when humor and cunning are used to outsmart an adversary.

Reading world folktales and fables is not only a wonderful way to entertain and bond with children, it is also an effective way to educate them. The stories in classic folklore offer both social lessons as well as an opportunity to teach about cultures and languages. Folktales provide an excellent way to teach kids about the consequences of good and bad behavior, the importance of cooperation, and the rewards of courage and ingenuity. In one of my favorite stories, *The Giant Turnip* (an adaptation of the Russian story *The Enormous Turnip*), a class grows a huge turnip and works together to figure out how to pull it out of the ground. The story helps young children grasp the benefits of community and working together.

Folktales also offer a great entry point for teaching children about other cultures. For instance, the fable *Dragon’s Tears* is a wonderful starting point to explore Chinese Culture. *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* can be used to begin teaching and learning about Arabic culture.

Bilingual editions of these traditional stories allow the parent or teacher to expose children not only to a different culture, but also to another language. I like to use Language Lizard’s bilingual version of the Indian folktale *Buri and the Marrow* (in which Buri wears an Indian sari) to expose my children to traditional Indian stories and foreign language scripts. The audio CD even lets them hear the story in Bengali and other foreign languages.

Folktales and fables have survived the test of time for a reason. So pick up a story, sit down with a child, and enjoy!
Did You Know?
“As children are surrounded with meaningful writing, they begin to learn that what is spoken can also be written and that there is a prescribed way for writing things down.”

Basic findings: The sequential stages in learning to write that children move through regardless of the child’s native language.

- Scribbling - making controlled marks to experiment with the visual appearance of writing.
- Linear/Repetitive Drawing - making marks that more closely resemble their own language system, cursive in English.
- Letter-like forms - making marks that look almost like letters.
- Letters and Early Word-Symbol Relationships - making symbols or letters that represent entire words.
- Invented Spelling - writing that demonstrates the knowledge of sound-letter relationships, of the structure of words, and of some grammatical rules.
- Standard Spelling - writing that demonstrates the knowledge that words have a standard spelling.

Tips for parents to encourage children to learn to write:
1. Take dictation and label the child’s drawings.
2. Accept all writing as valid from scribbles to standard spelling, by acknowledging and praising it.
3. Help your child break down words and letters into more manageable parts to develop phonemic awareness.
4. Provide models in daily life such as grocery lists, letters, notes; and many opportunities using materials like paper, crayons, pencils, and markers; for your child to write.

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Books:


Web Sites:


Emergent Literacy:

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

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

Multilingual Living Magazine - March/April 2007 75
Alice Lapuerta: Let us start with the most obvious (and possibly most frequently posed) question: what particular reason or motivation prompted you to write the book *Three is a Crowd*?

Madalena Cruz-Ferreira: The main reason was the vast discrepancy that I found between what I read in the literature about child language development and child multilingualism, and what I came to experience in my own family.

My husband, Peter, is Swedish and I am Portuguese, so our children started life with two languages. I was a trained linguist before I became a parent, although I started collecting language data from the children out of sheer curiosity at first, like many parents do. But very soon I realised that the children were doing things with their languages that were either disregarded or misinterpreted in the literature, particularly in literature about very early language. For example, their uses of intonation, the so-called melody of speech, before their utterances had any recognisable words in them, made it clear to me that they were, already then, dealing with two distinct languages. This made me question why ‘words’ are persistently hailed as the breakthrough into language, including monolingual language, and why researchers had not looked at uses of intonation to settle apparent dead-ends in child multilingualism, like whether and when multilingual children ‘differentiate’ between their languages. The evidence was there: there’s nothing to ‘differentiate’ among, because there are different languages from the children’s very first attempts at communication, long before children start speaking in words.

More generally, I started wondering why purported research in child ‘multilingualism’ went on bothering with monolingualism instead, typically comparing things like the number of words or syntactic constructions used in the same language by multilingual and monolingual children, instead of paying serious attention to what multilingual children across the board are doing to learn language.

Alice: Your book is a study based on your children Karin, Sofia and Mikael’s linguistic developments. You’ve collected data for over 10 years. Judging from the elaborate conversation transcripts that you present in your book - which give us really excellent insight into how a trilingual family communicates – you must have spent an incredible amount of time collecting, analyzing and transcribing conversations. How did you manage to do all this data-gathering?

Madalena: I was a stay-at-home mum when the children were small, so I could find time and opportunity to record and transcribe data – despite the usual hassles of learning...
to be a parent too. Most of the data concerns the children’s first few years, when a lot is happening all the time. As we say in my country, “they who run for pleasure don’t tire,” and I thoroughly enjoyed being able to mother and do research at the same time.

I certainly have my children and my husband to thank for their endless patience with my data collection-mania!

Alice: Could you please outline your family’s linguistic situation (who speaks what to whom, when)?

Madalena: The current default ‘who-speaks-what-to-whom’ situation is probably easiest to see in diagram form:

I say “default” because the ‘when’ issue is a tricky one. I found that there are occasions when using Portuguese to the children and expecting it from them just doesn’t work. One example is when their Swedish-speaking friends are visiting, when everyone uses Swedish to everyone else. The same goes for my husband, who also speaks Portuguese, and his language. English-only is not true either of the children’s exchanges among themselves. They may resort to one of their other languages, for example to discuss something private in an all-English environment.

So I could say that “default” means the languages that we use when there are no specific reasons to use other languages.

Alice: You’ve lived in Sweden, Portugal, Austria, Hong-Kong and Singapore. How did you manage to keep up your three languages every time you relocated? Did you ever have to change your language method in your family? Did you add on new languages with every move?

Madalena: Our stays in Sweden and Portugal posed no problem. At the time, there were only two languages in the family, Swedish and Portuguese, and both groups of relatives and friends helped nurture the children in each of their languages.

Things started getting interesting with our move to Austria. We thought we would stay there for an extended period of time (we didn’t in the end), and therefore started planning for Karin and Sofia’s schooling – Mikael is the youngest, and schooling was not an issue for him then. The two girls attended kindergarten in German, which we then assumed would become the family’s third language. That privilege went to English instead, for all three children and again for schooling reasons, with our move to Hong Kong and then to Singapore. Peter and I kept Swedish and Portuguese going as usual throughout this moving spree, and our family has always kept in close touch with our two countries. The children were quite laid-back about all this, simply taking it in their stride that if you live in another country, then you learn its language.

Alice: How did your children’s linguistic developments differ? How are they doing now?

Their linguistic development did not differ much, both from one another and from the typical developmental paths that are well-known from research on child language, in both Swedish and Portuguese. They each had their preferences in tackling their own language learning, something else that is also well-established in the literature. For example, one child would spend more time and effort figuring out the word-endings that are grammatically central in Portuguese, another child would find it more useful to practice different speech melodies with the same utterance. They did this in lone play, repeating things to themselves (or to their toys), or they found ways to ask us about them, for example by using deliberately wrong words or constructions, to check our
reaction.
They are now 20, 18 and 16 years old, respectively, and their patterns of language use haven’t changed. They still use Swedish with dad, Portuguese with mum, and English among themselves. Karin recently took a course in Mandarin at Fudan University in Shanghai and has become fluent in this language, and she uses it as a school subject. She is now learning German, because she wants to “recover her old language”, as she puts it. Sofia wants to learn Japanese and Mikael goes on with his Mandarin in school (both girls are at university now), but none of the children is interested in pursuing languages as academic subjects.

I must add here that technology made their use of Portuguese take an unexpected turn. The children were never schooled in this language, unlike Swedish and English, so they never had structured teaching about its spelling. Nevertheless, when electronic communication became an everyday utility, I was endlessly pleased to find out that they wrote to me in Portuguese. With mostly phonetic spellings at first (perhaps there’s another study here waiting to be done?), which have become more and more standard with regular practice.

Alice: Did any of your children ever resist a language or refuse to speak it?
Madalena: Not really. There was never downright resistance or refusal, although we had a few instances of hesitation, or adjustment. These arose when English was beginning to take shape as the children’s peer language and, by extension, their own language. Neither the children nor we parents had any idea how the family’s linguistic situation would come to look like, in time. We were all (still are!) living it and learning from it as it evolved, because the whole thing was new to all of us. Peter and I began noticing that the children used English with both of us when they came home from school, or when they otherwise wanted to report on what went on in school. We started by insisting that they use our languages as usual, until we realised that this resulted in silence instead. This is when we

Alice: In your book, you express a concern that when we encounter problems such as speech delay, multilingual children are treated for their multilingualism instead for other behavioural or linguistic problems which may be the actual cause behind the problem. You’ve experienced a similar problem with your daughter Sofia. Would you mind elaborating on this issue?
Madalena: This is indeed a critical issue. What happened in our family was that Sofia, aged 6, had problems adapting to her new school, when we moved to Singapore. Mostly, she missed the friends she had made in Hong Kong, and the first ‘real school’ she had started there (Year 1) just a few months earlier. Without consulting us beforehand, Sofia’s form teacher filed a referral to the school’s psychologist, to whom we parents were eventually summoned. The teacher’s ‘diagnosis’ was that Sofia’s behaviour was being “destabilised” by the use of too many languages. He was adamant that Sofia must enrol in a Special Needs class, and that we should stop using any other language than English with her. Karin and Mikael did not escape scrutiny either. Their teachers had no comments on their performance, but Peter and I were nevertheless sternly warned that Sofia’s misbehaviour was just the beginning. We should expect, sooner rather than later, similar behavioural disruption from our two other children unless we enforced English monolingualism at home.

A long bureaucratic process ensued, but the first point I wish to make concerns the sheer arbitrariness of this teacher’s assessment of one child’s problems, and the blind corroboration of his views by the remaining staff who had contact with Sofia. They were not expressing personal opinions (or perhaps they were, too), they were attempting to implement an officially sanctioned policy. It unsettled me very much to realise that multilingualism, something that had always been a natural and necessary part of our lives, should be singled out as the cause of a problem which had absolutely nothing to do with it. It made me wonder how many parents this teacher and others had managed to persuade that raising children multilingually is “detrimental”, and how many again,
out of misinformation and the alarm that goes with it, had followed his advice (we didn’t) about ‘curing’ the child by means of English monolingualism. I wanted to ask him, of course, what he would say to someone who advised him to use a foreign language with his own children, but I couldn’t, because English was the only language he knew. The question wouldn’t have made the slightest sense to him. And it unsettled me most to realise that Sofia’s teacher meant well. He genuinely believed that “many languages” are at the root of behavioural disruption.

The second realisation that dawned on me then was that if school authorities are so easily brainwashed into blaming multilingualism for any perceived deviation from whatever behavioural patterns they take as norms, then multilingual children with genuine problems, linguistic or otherwise, will simply go undiagnosed. And this for as long as the suggested monolingual therapy, if heeded, is left to produce its expected ‘effect’. Truly deficient uses of language have nothing to do with multilingualism. Language deficiencies affect monolingual and multilingual children alike, because the problem is language, not languages. These are two quite different things. Incidentally, I believe that much of the confusion about these issues stems from the ambiguity of the word ‘language’ in English, the language in which most of what we know about language and languages is reported, and often thought about.

I say in the book, and I repeat here, that we urgently need to gather hard data on the extent and depth of this noxious misguidance. I suspect it stands for the lion’s share of the current boom in referrals of multilingual children to speech and/or psychiatric ‘therapy’, often offered, needless to say, by therapists who are either monolingual or have no knowledge of their clients’ languages. We must be able to provide children who happen to be multilingual with a sensible, healthy, family and institutional environment in which to grow and thrive.

Alice: Mixing is usually regarded as something rather negative. We often read that we shouldn’t mix as this will “confuse” the child; we should always be consistent and speak only one language at a time (preferably one parent one language). Otherwise the child will learn only with great difficulty to separate the different language systems. Yet as we try to juggle three or more languages simultaneously, it is often inevitable to mix and switch languages, and to remain “consistent”. What is your take on this?

Madalena: There is an interesting story to be told here. When the children were born (and even before that), my husband and I naturally used our own languages with them. I say naturally because this apparent choice was in fact no choice at all. Peter had been nurtured in Swedish as a child, and I in Portuguese, these are the languages that we see as ‘ours;’ and so it was instinctively clear to us that these were the languages to use with ‘our’ children. Still today, if you ask me which language I speak to my children, I will unhesitatingly reply ‘Portuguese’.

The facts are different, though, and I have my tape recorder to thank for this insight. Because I ended up recording myself in spontaneous interaction with my children, I caught myself out speaking three different languages to them on different occasions: Swedish when singing and talking about Swedish nursery rhymes or when helping out with Swedish school homework (all three children attended Swedish Supply school from age 6), English when discussing current school topics and homework, and Portuguese otherwise.

I came to realise that the kind of language consistency that makes sense in multilingual families is likely to be related to use, not to person. If the children learned their times tables or the names of the human bones in English, it makes little sense to use a different language to check this knowledge. Here too, what feels natural is what works. The other issue is, of course, that the one-parent-one-language policy was devised for and by monolingual parents. In Singapore, for example, where there are four official languages and virtually everyone is multilingual from birth, this policy makes little sense. Bilingual parents in, say, Malay and English, will use both their languages to their children, who will accordingly learn them. Naturally.

Alice: Semilingualism: what is it, and is this something that we should be concerned about?

Madalena: “Semilingualism,” as far as I understand the use of this term, means ‘poor linguistic proficiency’. Semilingualism therefore afflicts monolinguals and multilinguals alike, and we certainly should be concerned about it. Languages are tools
that must be kept in good working condition, if they are to fulfil their purposes.

What we need not worry about at all, however, is the popular use of this term to characterise the mixed speech which is naturally found among multilinguals. Mixes are viewed as a sign of ‘half-proficiency’, or perhaps even ‘one-third proficiency, one-fourth proficiency’ and so on, in each of a multilingual’s languages, depending on how many they have. The reasoning goes that multilinguals mix because they have deficient command of each of their languages’ vocabulary or grammar, or both. They therefore need to resort to more than one language to express themselves, and they do this by using bits and pieces of one language to fill the gaps in another language, which in turn proves that they have incomplete knowledge of each language. The reasoning is fully circular, in other words, besides revealing deep ignorance of what multilingual mixes are all about, an issue which has been duly addressed in the literature.

The assumption behind this kind of reasoning is that the only way to express oneself properly is through one single language at a time. This, in turn, in fact assumes that monolinguals are never, by definition, semilingual. Both assumptions have deep roots that grow back to Ancient Greek thought about language ‘purity’, and current versions of them mirror it wholesale. Back then, anyone whose speech was unintelligible to educated monolinguals was a ‘barbarian’. Nowadays, they are ‘semilingual’. By the same token, anyone wearing French perfume or eating curry in the USA or in Portugal must be a ‘semicultural’.

**Alice:** Is the language acquisition process the same for monolingual and multilingual children?

**Madalena:** Yes. Monolinguals and multilinguals alike go through exactly the same acquisitional stages and use the same acquisitional strategies.

This is why I decided to do, in this book, something that I hadn’t seen done before, which was to draw overall conclusions about language acquisition from the same children’s multilingual and monolingual (Portuguese) productions. That is, I wanted to show that multilinguals tackle their learning of each of their languages in the same way that they tackle their learning of their multilingualism, not despite being multilingual, but precisely because of being multilingual.

**Alice:** You write that “Language acquisition is a back-and-forth process, which often surfaces in the shape of regressive or disrupted forms of speech. The reason for the production of a wrong word, or of a nonexistent form of a word, may lie in that the child is busy concentrating on sorting out something else, say the inflectional morphology of one language.” (page 306) In other words, when a child produces a wrong word this is not because s/he is confused, but because s/he happens to be concentrating on another area of development right now. Could one then conclude that in children’s overall development, it is entirely normal for them to go through phases in which they seem to regress?

**Madalena:** Yes. A kind of “U-shaped” curve is found in overall child development, including language development. It generally shows through worse productions at later ages, for example in cognitive tasks, which can raise some concern if you don’t know what is going on.

In language acquisition, one reason that I presumed might explain regressive productions is that children appear to apply themselves very methodically to their learning tasks, one thing at a time. If you’re currently curious about learning names for objects, you are not worrying to the same degree about learning past tenses, for example. We adults seem to do this too: when I first became acquainted with computers, I dedicated myself to learning all I could about word processors, then spreadsheet programmes, then email programmes, and so on, in turn. So while I was busy cracking spreadsheet secrets, my emailing skills were appalling.

One other reason is that we, children as well as adults, learn through generalisation. When children realise, say, that the plural of many nouns in English is formed by adding an -s at the end of the word, they assume that their observations apply wholesale and may then start talking about *foots* and *mouses*.
(or even feets and mice) instead of feet and mice as before. Generalisation is also the reason why I attempted to export my hard-earned mobile phone expertise from my old phone to a new model, with very frustrating results.

So apparently regressive productions like these are perfectly normal, and are in fact good news: they show us that children are reasoning their way through newfound regularities, and they therefore mean that learning is taking place.

**Alice:** There seems to be the rather wide-held belief that the brain can handle only so many languages simultaneously, that it just gets “crowded” up there and that we can overwhelm our children with too many languages. To the question “Is three a crowd?” you write that the answer “is an emphatic negative,” and that three, four or more languages don’t crowd the brain any more than one language does. If I understood correctly, learning several languages is not a matter of “endeavour” but of “management.” Could you elaborate on this?

**Madalena:** The notion of ‘brain crowding’ stems from currently fashionable models of the human brain as computer-like CPUs. Computer hard-drives do need a reasonable amount of free space to run processing operations smoothly. But while it is true that models provide streamlined ways of looking at what they model, and help us control variables that are in reality out of our control, there is a very real risk of taking the model for what it represents. Modelling brains as computers is just as useful (or not) as modelling, say, the human eye by means of a photographic camera and conclude on the properties of human eyesight on the basis of observed camera function.

The human brain is inherently plastic, and renews itself by producing new nerve cells and connections among them throughout life. In other words, the human brain changes and adapts, depending on how experience, linguistic or otherwise, pushes it. As far as we know, computer hardware does not renew itself according to input. Multilinguals have their brains adapted to serve communicative needs in different languages, taxi drivers have theirs adapted to navigate mental maps. And multilingual taxi drivers have differently-wired brains from their monolingual counterparts, or from multilingual cooks.

My children showed me that languages cannot ‘crowd’ the brain, because multilingualism does not involve an *addition* of languages. Language learning is about applying general acquisitional strategies to different languages, one or many, the same strategies that apply at any age to any object deemed worthy of investigation. Multilingualism is therefore a matter of resource “management”, as you say, not of filling in presumably idle brain space.

**Alice:** Thank you VERY much for your answers!

**Madalena:** You’re most welcome!

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*The book describes three siblings’ apportioning of linguistic and cultural space among three languages: Portuguese, Swedish and English. Parallel strategies accounting for monolingual and multilingual language management shape a truly illuminating picture of child linguistic competence. Written by a multilingual parent, educator and linguist, this book is for parents, educators and linguists in our predominantly, increasingly multilingual world.*

Visit Multilingual Matters for more information and to order this book: [www.multilingual-matters.com](http://www.multilingual-matters.com)
Equinox,
Equality,
Egalitarianism
By Sharon Cook-Gordon-Spellman

Between Grandparent and Grandchild

2

Multilingual Living Magazine - March/April 2007
I think something in our individual and collective psyches is always seeking balance, fairness and an egalitarian reality, where each person, creature, phenomenon, thing and idea, in nature and culture, as well as within our own psyches, has its due, its rightful place: “….for every thing, turn, turn, turn; there is a season, turn, turn, turn; and a time for every purpose under heaven…..” as the old biblical song of the Patriarchs, as popularized by Pete Seeger, goes. But multiplicity, diversity and the abundance of nature, in spite of mass extinctions, is overwhelming and incomprehensible. Our minds can’t fathom or digest such infinite richness. So it seems each of us must be content to know and understand the extent, breadth and depth of what life presents to each individual self, and try to find order and coherence in all we encounter, seek and find as we move through our individual and collective lives.

As when speaking, reading and writing, in the forms we now know and recognize today, first began, thousands of years ago, so also today, when a new-born child begins to hear, recognize, speak, read and write language, the news from our universe gets shared, passed on, expanded, clarified, and becomes part of the body of the known world, uniting us to it and to each other. Perhaps some are more fortunate than others when life presents them with opportunities to hear, learn and know the world through a variety of languages and cultures. Perhaps those few will understand nuances and subtleties of thought and perceptions that a child with only one language will not. Perhaps those children’s awareness of and respect for differences among cultural groups will be more highly developed. They may realize, at a much younger age, not only is there night and day; dark and light colors, but whole rainbows of meanings, with endless shades, tints, hues and varieties of languages and cultural expressions.

Thanks to my daughter’s devotion to both her own and her husband’s language and cultural roots, my grandchildren hear English and German spoken every day. Thanks to an inclusive kind of educational system, my grandchildren, and my grand nephew and grand niece too, will also acquire, at a young age, familiarity with at least one other spoken language. (Currently they are learning the rudiments of Spanish.) But, besides the language of written and spoken words, numbers, colors, shapes, science, music, love, movements, fashions, and gestures; even bird songs, changes of the seasons and all of nature each have their own separate languages, and these too will hopefully become, and already are, parts of who these children will become. Add to these a knowledge of their own and their parents’ family histories, the relationships that form the fabric of intergenerational bridges, and they may also become proficient in the languages of eras, places, regions, connections and rootedness; i.e., the concepts and ideas which form the particular, unique circumstances into which they were born.

However, for the time being anyway, as the equalizing force of this planet’s orbit begins to return more light to the Northern hemisphere, I’ll try to patiently remember that, “for every thing there is a season;” and I’ll hope that during the many seasons to come, these children’s adventures into all these realms of thought, words and deeds, will bring them countless blessings, joys and lives filled with the kinds of riches that are more precious than jewels or gold.

Happy Equinox to all, and may the peace and promise of rebirth, inherent in the Easter season, bring forth bountiful, renewed life to each individual person, as well as to all these varieties of languages, for the benefit of one and all.

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.
The Gift of Language, The Gift of Culture

By Kristin Reiber Harris
I recently spent a week in Oaxaca, Mexico and felt like I was falling in love all over again. The aroma, the intense sunlight, the panoramic vistas and the rhythm of life on the streets recharged my batteries in a way I had not anticipated. I had spent some time in Baja as a college student and with friends on the beach in San Felipe, but city living brought back memories of my first trip to Mexico as a teenager.

I started studying Spanish in high school. This was easy for me because I had a good foundation in French. My focus and interest in languages caught the attention of my teacher. She suggested I contact a family she knew in Monterrey, Mexico to see if they were interested in hosting me for a month in exchange for their daughter coming to my family home in suburban Washington DC.

In retrospect I am a little surprised my parents sent me off to Mexico to spend so much time with a family they knew only by reference. It was a resounding success and their instincts were correct about the experience.

I vividly remember flying into Monterrey and being overwhelmed by the beauty of the desert. I still remember the heat and intense light as I got off of the plane. Growing up on the East Coast, I had never spent any time in the desert. I fell in love with the landscape immediately. My admiration and love for the people was soon to follow.

The Juarez family lived in a small middle class home in suburban section of the city, Colonia Anahauac. The family consisted of the parents, three sons and three daughters. One daughter was in art school in Mexico City. The oldest daughter, Lynda was going to be returning with me to Virginia after my stay with the family. Her sister Leticia was about my age which was 15. The boys, Jaime, Emilio and Donato were 6, 9 and 12.

One objective of the trip was to improve my Spanish. It didn’t take long to realize how much I needed to learn. A wonderful surprise was finding the young boys in the family were perfect teachers for me with my one year of high school Spanish. It was a great way for us to engage with each other. This was their summer break and I’m sure in some ways I was a bit of a diversion for them.

I felt very welcomed by the family and relished the opportunity to tag along on
Donato Juarez turns 13
family trips, shopping and running errands. As I read back over the diary I kept, it’s not hard to see how being 15 years old affected my experience. I appreciate that I could exhibit some level of maturity under the circumstances. There were numerous comments about cute boys and embarrassing episodes. One I especially remember is slipping on the tile stairs as I was coming down to the living room to meet family friends. I think I just kept on walking out the front door. How embarrassing!

It is some of the more obscure aspects of family life that come back me most vividly. I was fascinated by the terra cotta tile floors that were mopped clean daily. Living with this family was intimate exposure to a whole new way of doing almost everything. I loved the daily trips to the tortillaria before the noon meal. Family life was centered in the kitchen and dining room. Senora Juarez was an American (but had lived in Mexico for over 20 years) so our diet was both familiar and new to me.

Highlights of the trip were actively participating in a piñata birthday party, trips into the desert and mountains surrounding Monterrey and having the opportunity to experience daily life in a whole new world. This world was one with which I felt a great camaraderie. I left my heart in Mexico because I had been welcomed with such enthusiasm and had gotten the opportunity to see how different but similar human lives are in a different country/culture.

I spent part of the next summer with the Juarez family in Mexico City and accompanied them on their drive back to Monterrey. Sadly I lost contact with them over the years. I continued my study of Spanish in Spain and college, thinking for a brief time I wanted to major in Latin American Studies. My true calling as an artist made itself clear to me and I have since pursued a career as an artist/animator.

I won’t ever forget this introduction to Mexican culture and how it has influenced my life since. The exuberance for life, the colorful palette of the country, its architecture and the beauty of the people are still with me today. My company recently released a bilingual (English/Spanish) animated DVD for preschool kids. There is no question in my mind that my experiences with Jaime, Emilio and Donato, the young sons/teachers in the Juarez family laid the foundation for this work I am doing now.

Kristin Reiber Harris is an artist/animator/educator who recently relocated to Central Virginia from the DC area. She is the creative director of Turtles In Ties (www.turtleinties.com), a media production company that creates bilingual (English/Spanish) DVD’s, mobile downloads and eBooks for young children 2 to 5. Her diverse interests include creating media for young kids, following her artistic muse and taking time to smell the roses. She and her husband live in Lynchburg, VA. She misses her two grown children who wandered off on schedule to follow their dreams.
Using two or more languages at home

One Family’s Journey

By Gerry Mac Donald-Morán

The author's children pose for a photo
Like many couples nowadays, ours was a bicultural and bilingual union that preceded parenthood; so when the stork delivered it was obvious that two languages, at least, would play vital roles in our home and in raising kids.

Identifying English as a first language with mom was predetermined, but the decision for dad to also use English only at home was based on necessity: I did not speak one word of Spanish when our first child was born and we moved to Mexico, so it was the simple decision to always use English at home- and a few strategic others later- that would help shape our children's language environments (none of which was initially based on research or expert opinions, but based more on our gut instincts and needs).

Throughout our first child's infancy I literally bathed him with the English language via conversation and song. He was the only person, albeit little, with whom I could speak my native tongue on a daily basis. Back then, society in central Mexico was, by and large, Spanish speaking; and although we fought criticism from family and friends who feared our child would never learn to communicate with them, we made the active choice to always speak with him in English until he later began to use Spanish of his own free will. Then, daddy took the cue and used Spanish socially, or in the presence of guests, to reinforce our son's eagerness to learn. This was a turning point that allowed us to identify, without strict definition, that daddy would always publicly speak Spanish with his children: later bringing it one step closer by speaking to them in Spanish at home as well (after each child had initiated school and had a firm grasp on English as their first language).

Back then, I too was learning Spanish. I exercised my growing language skills outside of the home, so that I would not use a heavily accented beginner's Spanish to corrupt our children's learning (we even went as far as to 'mostly' read books to our son in each of our native languages at bedtime, but I'll admit that part of my own learning occurred while engaged in a good children's picture book with my son). By the time I had become fluent (bilingual) we had welcomed another baby, and our firstborn entered an English immersion kindergarten where he was surrounded by his 'first' language academically, but played alongside native Spanish speaking children. The social influence was such that I needn't worry about a foreigner's accent or occasional errors, and I used social Spanish with our children much more.

This arrangement was perfect and the process was effortless to repeat (x 4 in total): English with mom or at school, and Spanish with dad, with nearby family or friends; and within society. It all made sense and it worked; but as easy as it looks, in practice we were not without conflicts. There were, especially in the beginning, misunderstandings and lots of necessary compromise, because each of us had brought the notion of bilingualism into our [parenting] relationship, but from two very different perspectives.

My partner had learned English as a second language through preparatory, professional, and private studies. He had traveled and taken a few courses here and there; however, by the time we met he had a satisfactory command of the language. For him, English was essential for his studies, career, and a future in medicine.

Similarly, I had studied core French throughout elementary and secondary schools and dreamed that 'some day' I would put past academic talents into the kind of practice that would make my Acadian great-grandmother proud. From my point of view back then, second language learning was a non-essential hobby or an art form to enjoy: A luxury.

I had never imagined that the basic necessity to learn a language would be the means to the end; yet, due to the newfound cultural nature of an extended family that included three different nations (Canada, Mexico and Spain) and three different languages (English, French and Spanish) in its collective history, as a couple with children we now felt a basic necessity and thus tried to weave it into our children's lives early on. Expanding their horizons and recognizing family roots, we placed the kids in French immersion, during an unexpected opportunity to return to live, full time, in Canada.

Here's where it gets twisted at times, tongue-tied or so to speak: Daddy is at the table speaking with any of the four kids in Spanish, I come along to ask a question and am responded to in English, or the kids read and rhyme out French homework and songs.

Truth be told, multilingualism is a gift that we, in our circumstances, can bestow upon our children (even when some factors and life circumstances change; you move, change schools, or meet new friends from abroad who inspire you to learn their language). We preserve the hope that now, through multiple language use, our children will engage in the family and societies that surround them, and that one day they will benefit from global perspectives; recognition of their ancestry, a bright spectrum of culture in their personal lives, and the ability to truly become citizens of one, greater world.

Just remember that YOU don't need to have a bicultural or bilingual family make-up to embrace bilingualism in countless societies today. If the resources and willpower exist, your children and family can reap the many rewards known to have a positive association to bilingualism. Just try it, and you'll see!

Gerry Mac Donald-Morán, who divides her time living between Canada and Mexico, is a graduate of Queen's University at Kingston Ontario with a Bachelor of Nursing Science degree and the mother of four young children. She currently works internationally as a medical research (Spanish-English) translator, style-corrector, and editor and is developing scholarly, two-way-immersion and multi-lingual curriculum design for an independent, alternative educational program. Her two recently published 'English as a second language' textbooks for nurses have sold worldwide (www.lynxpublishing.com) and she is presently editing two children's stories, in Spanish and English versions, for future publication. Make sure to visit her monthly column which is intended to preserve, protect, and promote the Canadian culture abroad: www.canadianculture.com. Send comments to Gerry: gerry@canadianculture.com, www.canadianculture.com/canadianabroad/
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In celebration of World Folktales and Fables Week (March 5-11), Language Lizard would like to offer a discount to all Multilingual Living Magazine subscribers. Through March 11th 2007 (the end of World Folktales and Fables Week), take advantage of a 10% discount on the following three popular folktales.

Simply apply Coupon Code CCS-FT upon checkout to receive the discount.

The Giant Turnip
by Henriette Barkow
illustrated by Richard Johnson

This traditional story, based on the Russian folk story The Enormous Turnip, is set in an inner city school and features a cast of appealing multiethnic characters. The children in Miss Honeywood’s class plant a garden and grow an enormous turnip! How can they pull it out? Children will enjoy seeing the class come up with creative ways to move the turnip. This book is a fun way to teach the benefits of cooperation and working together. Best for ages 3-8. The Giant Turnip is available at www.languagelizard.com in English with Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Czech, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Italian, Panjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu or Yoruba.

A multilingual audio CD and an English Big Book of the Giant Turnip are also available at Language Lizard.

Fox Fables
Retold by Dawn Casey
Illustrated by Jago

Fox Fables is a collection of two fables, one from Aesop and one from traditional Chinese folklore. In the first fable, Fox invites Crane over for dinner, but to prove his superiority, he serves the delicious meal in a bowl from which Crane cannot eat. When it’s Crane’s turn, she decides to play the same trick on Fox. Fox learns a lesson about feeling too superior over others. In the second fable, Fox finds himself face-to-face with Tiger, who wants to eat Fox for lunch. Fox has to use cleverness and cunning to outwit Tiger and save his own skin. Wendy Cooling, Children’s Book Consultant, called this the “perfect introduction to traditional fables brought to life with magical illustrations and lively read-aloud text.” Best for ages 4-9. Fox Fables is available at www.languagelizard.com in English with Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Chinese-Traditional, Chinese-Simplified, Croatian, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Panjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Scottish Gaelic, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Turkish, Twi, Urdu, Vietnamese or Yoruba.

A multilingual audio CD is also available at Language Lizard.

The Dragon’s Tears
by Manju Gregory
illustrated by Guo Le

This moving folk story tells how the twenty four lakes of the River Min came to be called the Dragon’s Tears. When Chin Wah releases a golden fish he is rewarded with the gift of a magic pearl. But this is when his troubles begin. Dragon’s tears is a classic Chinese tale about luck, magic, greed, tragedy and reconciliation. It is an excellent starting point to explore Chinese culture as well as classic folklore and its social lessons. The story is illustrated by a master of Chinese brush art illustration, a form famous for its spontaneity and energy, and told by storyteller and puppeteer Manju Gregory. Best for ages 5+. Dragon’s Tears is available at www.languagelizard.com in English with Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Chinese-Simplified, Czech, French, Gujarati, Japanese, Korean, Panjabi, Portuguese, Serbo-Croat, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu or Vietnamese.

A multilingual audio CD of The Dragon’s Tears is also available at Language Lizard.
During the past two decades the linguistic superpower, which we know as the English language, has been driving into Japan at a phenomenal rate. It has affected the lives of many Japanese who are suddenly expected to gain proficiency in this foreign language that serves no function as a tool for intercultural communication within Japan. Studies of bilingualism have tended to revolve around three core groups: Japanese learners of English; Kikokushijo or returnees who are the children returning to Japan from an extended period of living abroad usually due to their father’s work commitments; and the biracial children of international marriages (Yamamoto, 2001). The homogeneity of Japan is currently believed to stand at about 98% with ethnic minority groups making up less than 2% of a population in excess of 127 million people. Koreans and Chinese have had a long history of settlement in Japan, but recently, as a result of Japan’s economic boom in the 1980’s and the opening of Japan to Brazilians and Peruvians of Japanese ancestry (known as Nikkei) in the 1990’s, the number of people settling in Japan from South America has steadily increased. The Bureau of Statistics estimated that at the end of 2000 there were over 1.3 million foreign residents within Japan. The Hiragana Times quoted Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare data stating that there were 36,039 marriages registered between Japanese and non-Japanese partners as of 2003. As a nation, Japan is very much in its infancy with regard to multiculturalism.

Within Japan, attitudes toward the notion of bilingualism are typically varied. In a country with a lack of social debate it is often difficult to measure public opinion. Yamamoto (2001) interviewed a number of parents of bilingual children living in Japan. The feedback received suggested that bilingualism was perceived negatively within Japan. One particular mother commented, “people perceive being bilingual as a profanity against the pure Japanese atmosphere and hold strong feelings of both repulsion and jealousy.” Hayashi, (1999) had earlier questioned 680 Japanese people in order to ascertain their knowledge and attitude toward bilingualism and bilingual education. From her total sample, 60.3% of respondents had never heard of the term “bilingual education,” 26.4% had heard the term, but had no idea what it meant. Hayashi concluded that “these figures suggest that Japanese people have favorable attitudes toward bilingualism in general,” although it is questionable just how far the term favorable can be applied when many respondents showed such a clear lack of knowledge and understanding. Such contradictory views are not uncommon in Japan. Kachru (1997) highlights this by stating that “Japan has always had a love-hate relationship with the English language.”

After a century of contact between Japan and the Western world, the Japanese have fused a number of English loanwords into mainstream Japanese. Some estimate that the number of English loanwords found within the Japanese language is as much as 10% of the Japanese lexicon (Honna, 1995). Honna (1995) and Loveday (1996) identified a number
of patterns showing which loanwords follow when being borrowed or absorbed into the Japanese language:

1) simple borrowing (e.g. bairingaru ‘bilingual’)
2) semantic narrowing (e.g. purojekuto ‘project’- meaning a large scale plan)
3) Japanese innovations (e.g. sukinshippu ‘skinship’)
4) abbreviations (e.g. konbi ‘combination’)
5) acronyms (e.g. O.L ‘office lady’)
6) hybrids (e.g. gaijin buumu ‘foreigner boom’)
7) word play (e.g. go,go,go ‘five, five, five’ – good time to wake up 5:55am)

In 2002, the minister of education, culture, sports, science and technology, Atsuko Toyama, proposed a plan to organize a committee of language experts to identify ways to prevent the Japanese language from being saturated with foreign words. She commented to reporters that “[the] brainless importing of foreign words is damaging the nature and beauty of traditional Japanese language. The importing has sharply increased recently, which causes concern.”

The most recent Japanese government official who attempted to move toward the acceptance of English was the late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, who in 2000 proposed, as one of Japan’s goals for the 21st century, to make English the “second official language” of Japan. The idea, which would have obliged governments, local councils and other official bodies to draw up documents in both languages, was heavily criticized as a further move towards Western erosion of Japanese culture. The failure to view the English language not as a positive influence, but as an aggressive enemy is very much hindering the multicultural and multilingual development of the country. It is widely accepted that in countries that recognize two or more official languages, schools tend to support and encourage bilingualism by requiring extensive study of a second language. All aspects of social interaction such as family, school, and community support are crucial in order to maintain a balanced use of the two languages. It is also important to clarify that family, school, and community should cooperate with each other to create environments in which bilingual children can develop their bilingual proficiency.

Being “different” either linguistically or physically in a homogenous society such as Japan can be hard to handle, especially for children. The Japanese tend to promote and find comfort in being perceived as similar to each other. In a recent interview carried out by the BBC in Tokyo (2004), people were asked about their opinion on Japan’s uniformity. One Japanese lady commented, “Everyone has the same hair color and the same eye color. You feel maybe the guy next to you is feeling the same way, so it’s a good feeling to be homogenous”. The consequence of such thinking for the acceptance of other cultures and languages is worrying. Obviously, Japan is not ready to progress into the internationalized, multicultural, multi-linguistic arena just yet.

References


Damian Rivers (28) has been living in Japan for almost 7 years. A native of England he has a B.A and M.Sc degree in Social Psychology as well as a T.E.F.L certification, and is in the process of completing an M.A in Applied Linguistics. He is currently expecting his first child who will be born later this year. He can be contacted at damiworld@mac.com and is interested in all areas of bilingual development and language acquisition.
Pack Him in Onions and Other Remedies

By Pam Mandel
I spent most of the Christmas holidays in bed. I had a nasty cold. The worst part of it was not missing the holiday festivities, though I was bummed out by that. The worst part was the feeling that I had a baseball lodged in my head, somewhere between my tonsils and my Adam's apple.

This went on for about five days. I missed another family dinner. Apparently those present at the New Year’s Eve meal took this time to discuss my treatment, as the husband came home with a solution to all my problems. It was a package of Topfen (an Austrian hybrid that’s somewhere between ricotta and cottage cheese) and some bandages. “You’re going to get a Topfenwickel,” he said.

Now, I thought he said ‘Topfenweckerl’, which is one of my favorite bread products, a roll that’s made with Topfen as a main ingredient. I love those things. They’re sort of nutty and have a lot of seeds stuck all over the outside. They’re great toasted with butter and cheese on them. I wasn’t very hungry and my throat still hurt like crazy, but a Topfenweckerl seemed okay. I could eat, I guess.

He sent me to bed. He stood at the head of the bed and started spreading the cheese on the bandages. “What the hell are you doing? I can’t eat that!”

“You’re not supposed to eat it. I’m going to wrap you up in it and you’re going to lie here for an hour. It’s to suck out the infection.”

“Is this some kind of a joke? Did you sit around at dinner making up jokes to play on the foreigner?”

‘Wickel’ was the word of the day. It means bandage and it’s no joke. The husband applied the cheese-topped bandages, cheese side down, to my embattled throat. Then he threw on a bunch of extra blankets and left me there for an hour. Or two. Or more. It seemed like an eternity. As much as I like Topfen, I prefer it in my bread roll or my Strudel. It’s not as appetizing when it’s applied to your skin with the requirement that you lie still for an hour, stinking of cheese.

A cold, they say, goes away in seven days if you do something about it, and a week if you don’t. By the time day seven arrived, I was feeling a lot better and was up and about again. I can neither confirm nor deny the effectiveness of the Topfenwickel. I can, however, attest to fondness of the locals for wacky, homespun treatments.

For Christmas, my mother-in-law bought me a month at the local fitness club. This place is, most of the time, a henhouse. It’s full of chatty, sixty-ish ladies who seem to find my accent hilarious. The guy that runs the place, Adi, is a former bodybuilding champion with a certain circus quality about him. He’s hilarious. The guy that runs the place, Adi, is a former bodybuilding champion with a certain circus quality about him. He’s hilarious. The guy that runs the place, Adi, is a former bodybuilding champion with a certain circus quality about him. He’s hilarious.

At home, I told the husband about this. He seemed unsurprised but declined to let me pack him in onions. He told me that there are lots of these home remedies and everyone uses them. They’re better, everyone thinks, and cheaper, than the chemical solutions provided by a visit to the doctor. He told me that for fever, you’re supposed to wrap the hand and feet of the afflicted in vinegar soaked towels. For diarrhea? Eat dried blueberries. Headache? Chamomile tea. And sage leaves for an irritated throat.

Maybe the sheer annoyance of being sent to bed with something smelly applied to your body is enough to get you over whatever is bothering you. I can’t say. I do know I’m suffering no ill side effects from being wrapped in cheese and that the smell of onions all over your sweetheart just about guarantees there will be no lovin’.

I did go to the doctor here last winter when I’d developed a nasty sinus infection. He sent me away with a bunch of prescriptions but no grocery list. I recovered in about a week. I remain unsure about which approach would have provided the better solution.
**Brio**

“Parenting in a global world” is the subtitle of this wonderful website dedicated to sharing cultural insights and information. Dipu Patel Junankar, the mastermind behind Brio, is full of childhood memories of living in different countries and traveling. This is the inspiration for her starting her website which includes articles from writers expressing their appreciation, curiosity and joy with language and culture. Visit today and maybe you will even be inspired to share your own story?

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**Reading a-z**

Looking for mini-books in English, French and/or Spanish? Readinga-z.com has a long listing of many titles which will delight your early reader! Don’t forget to print out the lesson plan for each book! - these are packed with ideas for preparing and understanding the story and how to incorporate even more vocabulary use. Each lesson plan also includes an assessment at the end to help you determine how well your children comprehended the book. A wide range of fiction and non-fiction topics are covered and each book contains delightful illustrations. The books are created for parents to print out and staple together.

**Website:** [www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)

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**Kids Around the World!**

“Kids connect with kids... all around the world.” Aimed primarily toward children in the United States, this site can be enjoyed by families around the world. Introduce your children to other children living in the world’s various countries. Don’t miss the delightful interviews! You can read them together with your children or even listen to them. See photos of each child, where they live and other family members. Want to learn even more? Additional website links are provided to learn more about each target country. The site also puts together lesson plans which can be used with the resources on the site. Make sure to check it out and share the world’s language and culture with your kids!

**Website:** [www.katw.org](http://www.katw.org)

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**My Wonderful World**

“Give Kids the Power of Global Knowledge!” The National Geographic does it again with this fabulous site to help use learn more about world geography, culture and more! It all starts with understanding where people in our world live. Test your global knowledge by taking a Global IQ Test! Don’t let your kids miss the Games and Cool Stuff link and when they are done having fun, check out the For Parents link and learn about 10 Ways to Give Your Kids the World. This site is packed with fun educational resources set against beautiful photos and plenty of color and design.

**Website:** [www.mywonderfulworld.org](http://www.mywonderfulworld.org)

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**Ancient Scripts**

“A compendium of world-wide writing systems from prehistory to today.” This site will tantalize anyone interested in the scripts of our world’s written words. Make sure to check out the “families” link under “Writing Systems.” Learn about your own language’s script and then learn about the multitude of additional scripts in the world. Under the “Regions” link you will find scripts organized by area of the world. And have a little fun with a memory game using scripts! What could be a more enjoyable way of coming to appreciate our world’s linguistic history?

**Website:** [www.ancientscripts.com](http://www.ancientscripts.com)

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**Children’s Library**

Digital books in a multitude of languages at your fingertips! Check out their listing of bilingual books as well as books in single languages. Many of the books are digital representations of old classics, which most of us would never have had the opportunity to read were it not for this site. What is the mission of this site? “Ultimately, the Foundation aspires to have every culture and language represented so that every child can know and appreciate the riches of children’s literature from the world community.” You won’t want to miss this site.

**Website:** [www.childrenslibrary.org](http://www.childrenslibrary.org)
How We Met
Fred & Ingrid

I think that I was born to always be a foreigner. I was the child who ate the black bread, poppyseed cake and Schnitzel, whereas standard food in homogeneous Australia in the 70’s was white bread, chocolate cake and meat with three kinds of vegetables.

My father was from Austria and preferred to eat the food he knew, which meant that we did too. But it wasn’t just the food we ate that was different. Our Sunday best was the Dirndl my aunt had sent us from Austria, not a skirt and blouse that Australian children would wear. Our version of Monopoly was in German (even if we didn’t understand it either). We were growing up living a whole other culture that we really didn’t know anything about. Only that it made us different.

Many years later, unhappy with my job, I decided to take some time out to decide what to do with my life. I followed the journey of the Australian backpacker to Europe. It was an opportunity to visit the family I never knew in Austria.

My father came from a family with 5 children. As a result, I have 19 cousins and 8 aunts and uncles I did not know. The family continues to live within a 10km radius of each other. They are constantly in and out of each other’s lives, typical of small village living. I stayed with my father’s sister and joined their life. Fred was The Neighbour. I met him at a charity benefit. He and a cousin were trying to tell me about the GEIST in the alcohol. I knew that we called alcohol ‘spirits,’ but did not know of any ghost. This was my introduction into the irregularities in languages. Not everything is translatable. I continued to bump into Fred as village people are not insular like city people. I didn’t realise the impact he had on me until I went away to Italy for 2 weeks and kept on having strange dreams where he was in each and every one. Upon returning to Austria, I arranged for a cousin to take me to visit him. A bottle of wine later and we were a couple. There was no need to take time to find out if he was nice, reliable, and those other facets which I have discovered are important in a partner, as my family had known him since he was born. Each gave an opinion about his personality which all correlated. We just worked on the chemistry.

It didn’t take long before we both decided that we wanted to be with each other. We were both old enough, and both knew what we wanted in a partner when we finally met. We were together for a few weeks before I went off to Africa for 6 weeks. Then another few weeks later I went to England to work. We talked on the phone constantly. We agreed to get married while we were on holiday in Australia. We later worked out that we had been in the same country for a total of 10 weeks before we were married. The 10 days together over Christmas resulted in our daughter Molly. We flew to Australia in February and were married on the 24th. Quick. But it works. Five years later we are still together and it is still working.

Although I have a good marriage, being a foreign wife is not so easy. When I first lived in Austria, I could only communicate with a dictionary. It would take me half an hour to explain to my aunt that being vegetarian does not mean taking the meat pieces out of the soup. Fred and I often used to get upset with each other just because we misunderstood what each other said. We had to learn to trust that the other person is always after our best interests, even if it didn’t sound like it. Not speaking the language meant that I was unable to make friends. I would go to parties with Fred’s friends and sit there not understanding anything. It was easier just to stay at home. Over time I learned to speak German, but it is still the little things, like not being able to gossip because I can’t speak the local dialect or even understanding the humor, that still creates the blockages in making the friendships I was used to having in Australia. Living in a small village also takes something to get used to. This is the sort of village where everyone knows what you are doing before you know it yourself. Being the outsider made me more noticeable. Everyone knew who I was, as my father grew up here and now I am married to a local, but I am still not a part of the village. The lady in the local shop only started talking to me after I had my second child. I think everyone was scared that I would leave and take Fred with me as they could see that I didn’t really fit in. At times, the isolation and loneliness was unfathomable, making me rely more on Fred to provide what I was missing. I would fill my time escaping into other people’s worlds through books.

But I have survived living in Austria for seven years now. I don’t know if I could return to live in Australia again, even with all the difficulties of living in a foreign country. I am now a blend of two cultures. I love and dislike things about both cultures. I love the freedom and diversity in Australia. I love the sense of family and traditions in Austria. I miss the sunshine and the beaches but I love having a white Christmas and seeing the snow falling outside while warm and snug with a hot chocolate. The funny thing is, though, that in Australia I didn’t identify myself so much as an Australian. But here in Austria I have become the UberAustralian. I have the Australian flag outside on Australia day. I have the Aboriginal art and didgeredoo. My children have grown up learning ‘Redback on the Toilet seat’. My children are a result of this mixture. They identify themselves as both Austrian and Australian. And they are proud to be so. Like their mother.
Esperanto is a phonetic language. This means that the letters are always pronounced the same way, regardless of their position within the word and regardless of other letters that are next to them. In English, the letter combinations “sh” or “ch” represent one sound that is different from the individual letters. This concept does not exist in Esperanto. Each letter is independent from the others.

When pronouncing whole words, the stress is always placed on the second-to-the-last syllable. For example, the word for cake “kuko” is with an emphasis on the “ku”: KU-ko. The same is true for pano (bread), komputilo (computer) and kato (cat).

The Esperanto alphabet is composed of 28 letters. Of the standard 26 letters, the letters w, x and y are missing. There are 6 additional characters that can not be found in other languages: ĝ, ŭ, ĉ, ĥ, ŝ.

**Esperanto Alphabet:**

A -- like the A in m*a*ma
B -- like the B in *b*oy.
C -- like the TS in ca*ts*.
Ĉ -- like the CH in *ch*ange.
D -- like the D in *d*o.
E -- like the E in l*e*t.
F -- like the F in *f*ox.
G -- the G in *g*o.
Ĝ -- like the G in *g*em.
H -- like the H in *h*ose.
Ĥ -- like the German CH in Ba*ch* (no „k“ sound)
I -- like the E in m*e*.
Ĵ -- like the S in mea*s*ure.
J -- like the Y in bo*y*.
K -- like the K in boo*k*.
L -- like the L in *l*ed.
M -- like the M in *m*om.
N -- like the N in *n*ot.
O -- like the O in n*o*t.
P -- like the P in *p*lay.
R – like the R in fu*r*.
S -- like the S in *s*chool.
Ŝ -- like the SH in *sh*op.
T -- like the T in *t*ram.
U -- like the OO in r*oo*t.
Ŭ -- like the W in ro*w*
V -- like the V in ca*v*e.
Z -- like the Z in *z*ero.
Activity #1: Tongue Twisters
Try to pronounce the following tongue twisters! Not sure what they mean? Then read the word-for-word and grammatical translations underneath for the meaning.

1) Petro, vi la permeson de la patro nepre prenu por partopreni entreptrenon.
Petro, certainly ask permission of [the] father to participate in an enterprise.

2) Ĉu ŝi ĉiam ĉe ĉio ruĝiĝas?
Does – she – always – at – everything – turn red?
Does she always blush at every occasion?

3) Al la apartamento parte apartenas aparta portaparato.
To – the – apartment – partly – belongs – separate – lift
A separate lift partly belongs to the apartment.

4) Ne ploru, plorulino, pro propra plezuro.
Don't cry, crying girl, for your own pleasure.

5) Ŝi havis šancon serĉi ŝercon.
She – had – chance – to search – jokes.
She had the chance to search for jokes.

6) La scivolema sciuro sekvis la scienciston, ĉu tion ĉi scias vi?
The – curious – squirrel – followed – the – scientist – did – this – know – you?
The nosy squirrel followed the scientist, did you know this?

7) Kiu kuiras keksojn kuirejen?
Who – cookes – biscuits/cakes – in the kitchen?
Who is cooking cakes in the kitchen?

Activity #2: Numbers
Try to pronounce the following numbers using the help provided.

nul (0), unu (1), du (2), tri (3), kvar (4), kvin (5), ses (6), sep (7), ok (8), naŭ (9), dek (10), cent (100), mil (1000)

1) 123
cent du dek tri
(cen=100, du dek = 20, tri = 3)

2) 10000
dek mil

3) 1111
mil cent dek unu

Now try these to find out how well you have learned your numbers!

1) 9999
= ?

2) 100 000
= ?

3) Mia telefona numero estas 12 34 5678 91011
= ?

Answers to the final three exercises:
1) 9999 = naŭ mil naŭ cent naŭ dek naŭ
2) 100 000 = cent mil
3) Mia telefona numero estas: dek du tri dek kvar kvin mil ses cent sep dek ok naŭ dek unu mil dek unu

Oliver Kim is an Esperantist and Teacher at an International School in Austria.
Activities

Mystery Objects

Gather a number of items of which your child knows the names, and gather a few which she does not yet know (to add to the challenge). Ideas of items which make for a fun game: paperclip, button, comb, sock, pen, apple, a walnut… Name each of the objects with your child as you and he put them into a bag. Then ask your child to put his hand into the bag and guess what each object is before pulling it out. If he does not know what the name of the object is, ask him to describe what he feels - is the object hard or soft, have sharp or round edges, etc. Each time you play, add a few “new” items. Try to choose items that have unique characteristics.

This activity is great for learning vocabulary and is also a lot of tactile fun!

Cut It Out!

Do you find the advertisements from supermarkets and other shops that clog up your mail box (or that land every day in front of your door) annoying? We do too. But wait! Don’t recycle them! REUSE them for a better purpose! Take the whole stack, give it to your child together with a pair of scissors, glue and a piece of paper, and ask her to cut out all things that are, for instance, red (or all things green, or fruit, or things in general to eat) and help her make a collage by gluing them on a piece of paper. Afterwards, let her show you what she created. Go over the words together: “This is a red apple.” “This tomato is red, too…” And discuss the categories: “These are all things to eat, right? Which are your favorite things to eat?”

This activity is great for building vocabulary, especially in groupings (colors, shapes, sizes, etc.) as well as hands on cutting, pasting and more.
Hungry Cow

Draw a big cow face on a piece of cardboard, or better yet, draw it on the side of a cardboard box. Make sure it has a big mouth. Then cut out just the mouth from the cardboard to leave a big hole where the mouth should be. Find a few small toys and items around the house and cut out some items from old magazines and supermarket advertisements. Gather all of these items and put them in a pile in front of the big cow face. Ask your child if she wants to feed the cow all of the items you have collected. Then as she puts the items into the cow’s mouth, have her say, “The cow eats...” Help her with the names of the items that she can’t remember or doesn’t know. To make it a little more complex (and fun) have her include as many adjectives as she can think of: “The cow eats a yellow, fluffy, soft, light bird.”

This activity helps to encourage the vocabulary of every-day objects and descriptive words.

Body Parts

While using finger paints, have your child make foot and hand prints on a piece of paper. Then, after the paint has dried, label the parts of the foot and hand together with your child. If your child can write, have him label the parts himself. Otherwise, you can do the writing but have him help you name the different parts.

Another fun way to learn body parts is to have your child lay down on a big piece of paper (or smaller pieces of paper taped together) and then trace around his body. Have him add in eyes and a mouth, etc. and then together label as many parts as he can name!

This activity helps to teach the names of the body parts a well as encouraging writing. This also encourages color recognition.

Apple starts with A...

Choose a letter (or sound) from the alphabet and then go around the house with your child and have her name things that she sees that begin with that letter. Help her to sound things out and make sure to give her time to identify objects herself. It is a challenge for children to think of the names of the items they see, and then to make the connection between the name and the sound. A lot of complex thinking is going on in that brain! It can be easier if instead of using the name of the letter, you use the sound of the letter that you are searching for. For example, in English, you and your child could look for things that start with the sound “buh” rather than the letter “bee.”

Have fun doing this activity everywhere you go: on a drive to school, while walking through the grocery store, while waiting for the dentist or doctor.

This activity can also smoothly lead into learning to write letters and words. After your child is done identifying things around the house, have her draw a few of her favorite things and then to write the first letter of the item next to it. Or, if she is interested, have her write the whole word of the item.

This activity is a great way to help your child get used to the concept of individual sounds connected to objects and meanings as well as learning to put the sounds on paper as letters.
I am Belgian, living in the UK and have a 15 month old son whom we are raising bilingualy. I speak Dutch to him, my husband speaks English, and he attends an English nursery. All of our friends are English. My husband is extremely supportive and is even making the sincere effort to learn Dutch. We also make sure to visit my Dutch-speaking family on a regular basis. I have found a lot of local Spanish, German and French resources but not much in the way of local Dutch resources. I have also not found any other Dutch speakers in the neighbourhood. Without access to such resources, do you have any suggestions for (1) how I can provide additional Dutch exposure for my son and (2) how to receive the moral support I need to stay motivated?

Kat in the UK
Dear Kat,

First of all, let me congratulate you on your decision to raise your son bilingually, and also on your husband, for wanting to learn your language. That everyone in the household wants to understand what everyone else is saying is a very telling sign that everyone cares.

Second, I should tell you that I was exactly in the same situation as you when my first child was about the same age as your son. We lived in my husband’s country, where my child had no access to my language except through me.

Now to your questions.

(1) How can I provide additional Dutch exposure for my son?

If you are a stay-at-home mum, you may not need additional resources. Your son will have enough daily contact with you for him to carve his own ‘niche’ for Dutch. This was the case for me, and what happened when my second child was born (also in my husband’s country) was that the oldest one unquestioningly started using my language to the new baby. The reasoning seems to have been something like ‘This is clearly the language that mums and babies should use among themselves.’

If you nevertheless feel that you want to broaden his exposure to Dutch in Britain, you can try books, audio and video in this language, that you can have sent to you from Belgium, or get yourself while there. Read to him, sing to him and together with him, teach him Dutch nursery rhymes and traditional stories, discuss these stories with him, plus exciting cartoon or other films (even dubbed in Dutch). The one risk I really sensed in being the exclusive user of my language to my children was that the children would eventually feel that my language was an ‘adult’ language and therefore of no interest to them. Making your son aware of the delights of ‘child Dutch’ will make him want to be able to enjoy such delights in this language.

(2) How can I receive the moral support I need to stay motivated?

You say that you visit your Dutch-speaking family regularly. Watching your son communicate with them in Dutch must be an invaluable source of support, besides making you feel very proud of yourself – and of him!

The nurture that he gets from your relatives in this language, which is surely different from the one you provide him with, is also an additional way of helping him stay motivated to use Dutch. Make sure to let your relatives be with him on their own (without you) as much as possible, so Dutch doesn’t risk fossilising as “mummy’s language”. All-Dutch outings, sleepovers at your relatives’, shows, or even playing games or watching TV quietly at home can do the trick. In short, make your son realise that Dutch is a very useful and fun language to have available, for many different purposes and for talking to many different people. Children are as practically-minded as we adults are, which means that they won’t bother to learn anything, languages included, for which they see no use. And if your child is motivated in these ways to go on learning Dutch, then this will be your greatest motivation too.

I hope this helps!

Sincerely,
Madalena Cruz-Ferreira

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

Do you have a question for our experts? Send them to editor@biculturalfamily.org!
Too Many Languages?

My wife is French and I am Turkish, we live in Germany and speak German together. We will be moving to England soon for my job. Is it reasonable to try and speak all four languages with our baby?

Talking Funny?

When we get together for extended family gatherings, my sister’s children who are 8 and 10 tease my preschoolers because they “talk funny.” We speak Italian at home and my children go to an English speaking day care. This conflict with the cousins is causing tension with my sister and I. What is the most productive way to talk to her about this?
**Answer to “Too Many Languages?”**

Four languages is a lot to handle at one time. You have both practical issues to think about as well as those of the heart. There is no perfect answer. If you want to use the advice of linguistic experts like Fred Genesee (January 2007 Multilingual Living Magazine) and Grace Alvarez (Multicultural Living 2006) you would talk to your baby in Turkish and your wife would talk to the baby in French. In the early years you could speak German at home as well. How strong you decide to use German as the family language will depend on whether you plan to be expatriates for a few years in England or immigrants. Eventually, if you stay in England, you and your wife will have to choose to communicate outside the house in English as will your child. From the psychological point of view, you have some tough decisions to make; what will be the dominant country culture for your family? As your child grows he will need cultural grounding as well as language grounding. Your family will be a blend of culture and language but which language and culture does your heart say should dominate? How often will your child see relatives from your homeland(s) Do your parents and your spouse’s parent speak more than one language? Read the article on changing cultural identity in Multicultural Living February 2007. Remember there is no perfect way to do this and no good models either. Talk to other multicultural families for support. What you decide to do about the language(s) in the home is not as important as being consistent when you put a plan into place.

**Answer to “Talking Funny?”**

I don’t know the whole story of your relationship with your sister but it is common for kids 8-10 to be intolerant of anything out of the mainstream. At that age “being like everyone else” is very important and children can be cruel. One possibility is to talk to your sister about giving her children some fun, positive experiences about Italian culture. It could take the form of books, movies for children (translated), comic books, food and cooking together, music for children, anything that would help these cousins feel included in the Italian culture. You might volunteer to come to their classroom with your children to bring food, songs, fashion, something upbeat and “cool”. Ask your sister if she wants to participate in family “Italian night” with food, music and a few lessons for her kids to share with their friends. The important thing is to keep the conversation going on how you can connect the cousins in a positive way to your Italian culture and language.

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**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 her web site at [www.harrietcannon.com](http://www.harrietcannon.com). If you have a question for Harriet, send it to her at: harriet@harrietcannon.com.

**Have a question for our experts? Send an email to: editor@biculturalfamily.org**
Ages 0-2: Planning Ahead

Raising children in more than two languages can be a challenge if a plan isn’t in place as early as possible. Before your child can speak, start thinking about how you want to go about raising her in more than two languages. Where will the additional languages come from? Will you practice the One-Parent-One-Language method, with the community language providing a third? Maybe a care provider will add a third or fourth language to your family’s mix? Set realistic expectations for yourself, your children and your family. Most likely the two languages of your household will come most naturally so don’t be surprised if your little one speaks those languages first and most fluently, at least at first. Once your child is in school, it is possible that the community language (or the language of instruction) will take on a far more important role. So, set up your plans now before that time comes! Make sure you are prepared for the long haul and are ready to make changes and adaptations along the way. Discuss your plans with caregivers and family members, even if you suspect that they will try to discourage you. This is the perfect time to get started!

Ages 3-5: Exposure

A key to raising multilingual children is ensuring your little ones receive as much exposure to each language as possible. Exposure can be your speaking the language to your child but it can also be via an academic environment, a caregiver, a family member or others in the community. Most likely your child will gain his third or fourth language via his time spent in school and with friends who speak the community language. This is a wonderful way for your child to become a natural multilingual. Remember, though, your child will only continue to be a multilingual if he continues to be exposed to these languages over time. Language learning is part of a life-long continuum. Don’t expect him to become multilingual if he spends one hour a week in a language program or if he spends three intensive months at a summer camp. He will still benefit from the language learning and exposure but without continued exposure, he will slowly lose his familiarity with the language. It is not enough to just expose your child to a third or fourth language. He needs to interact in the language and to have a reason to use it as much as possible.
Ages 6-10: Peers

As we all know, peers play an important role in the development of children (and adults for that matter). It is no different when it comes to language influence. Peers can be a wonderful way for your child to pick up a third or fourth language but it is also important to be aware of why the language of peers has such a meaningful impact on your child: The language of peers is a language which matches the age and developmental stage of your child. Peers are interested in discussing similar topics and your child is picking up the target vocabulary and personal associations. While you and your spouse may speak with your child in your languages all the time, you are still an adult speaking to your child in the role as parent. Thus, do not be surprised if your child begins to feel more comfortable explaining things to you in the language of his peers. He is most likely not purposely shunning your language. Instead, he may feel that he can explain his thoughts and feelings with you better in the language which he discusses such things with his peers.

One way to help your child feel more comfortable speaking about his feelings in your language is to help him gain the necessary vocabulary and associations in your language. Perhaps he is interested in discussing the latest music, clothing and media fads with you, which would give you the opportunity to use vocabulary which otherwise may not come up. But if he (or you) would rather not discuss such things together, then try to find peer-relevant DVDs and CDs or even short novels aimed at his age group. Time spent in your native country can do wonders! Your child will be exposed to others his age who speak your language and will have the perfect chance to pick up on their vocabulary (which may not be the vocabulary you’d like him to pick up). It is important to remember that communication is crucial at this age, regardless of his language preference. Keep speaking your language to him and give him the opportunity to come around to using your language more and more.

Ages 11-18: No Big Deal

Don’t be surprised if your child doesn’t really think multilingualism is a big deal. There are more and more multicultural and multilingual families out there these days so it is very possible that your child meets others who have similar family situations all the time. Plus, since it isn't always obvious to others that we are multilingual families, many may not even know and therefore treat your child as an average child.

Although you may be extremely proud of the fact that your child can speak two, three, four or more languages, hold back from making a big deal about it around your child. You most likely will simply embarrass her. Plus, she is probably more interested in her own accomplishments in life which have nothing to do with multilingualism than the fact that you were able to raise her multilingually. She didn’t make the concerted effort to become a multilingual so she probably doesn’t see this as any great accomplishment on her part. This is a perfect stage in your child’s life for you and your spouse to discuss a myriad of topics which interest her in your languages! Is she looking forward to taking horseback riding lessons? Then make sure you and your spouse discuss as much as you can about what this entails. This will help to enrich her already strong vocabulary with new words and meanings. This isn’t a time to make any big changes in your language structures. What you have been doing so far is working. Your child is familiar with her language patterns and feels comfortable with them. If you are lucky, she will have learned to read and write in her languages and will be able to build her vocabulary via books and pen pals as well. Make sure she has the opportunity to spend time in countries where her languages are spoken natively. All in all, you should be proud that your child doesn’t think multilingualism is a big deal! It may feel like a let down for parents after having put in so much effort. But this is the true reward of success!
Quick Flatbread
A single-layered flatbread without yeast, quick and easy to make!

250 g flour
¼ l water
4 Tsp oil
1 teaspoon salt
some oil to spread on

Work flour, water, oil and salt into a thick, viscous dough. Grease baking pan. Spread dough thinly onto pan in circular shape. Bake 3-4 minutes at 250C.

Hummus

1 can chickpeas
2 cloves garlic
juice of 1 lemon
2 tablespoons of tahini
salt to taste

Put all the ingredients in the blender, add juice of chickpeas and blend until everything is completely mashed.

Serving suggestion:

Put hummus on a plate, pour 3 tablespoons olive oil over it and garnish with olives, pieces of sliced tomatoes pieces of sliced cucumber, top it with parsley. Serve with corn chips or flatbread.

Enjoy!

Thank you
to Lisa International School Auhof and Pfarrcaritas Kindergarten St.Florian for the contribution of these recipes
Mix the flour, baking powder and softened butter with your hands until the mixture is flaky. Then add in the rest of the ingredients to the flaky mixture and mix well. Pour the complete mixture into a 9 inch x 9 inch greased and lightly floured dish or pan, and bake in a preheated 350 degree Farenheit oven for approximately 30-40 minutes, or until it is golden on top. A toothpick inserted in the center should come out clean.

Note: this is a fairly small recipe. Double it for a large group or prepare 1 1/2 of this recipe and place in a 13 inch x 9 inch baking dish.
DVD helps Kids 2 to 5 learn English and Spanish

iParenting Media Award winner and endorsed by KidsFirst

“Simple, bold animation, bright colors, fun characters, and engaging original music combine to create an entertaining and educational environment for learning a language.”

School Library Journal

“Delightful DVD!
Mary Ann Duffus
Founder, Brooksfield School

“I loved it and so did my son. He wanted to watch it again and again.”

iParenting Media Award judge

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having a hard time?

Our May/June 2007 issue will be packed with ways to help you through your family’s PROBLEM areas. Passive bilingualism worrying you? What about siblings? Can’t think of ways to get your kids using your language? THIS ISSUE IS FOR YOU!

let the experts help...

Hear what our line-up of experts have to say - advice, tips, support and more - about the problems that bilingual families are facing.

activities and more...

Having ideas for activities, games and interactions in your language are what can help you get through the tough times. Get going with our favorites!

you are not alone!

Our columnists understand what you are going through! Their willingness to share their struggles can help us all more easily stumble through ours.

articles, articles, articles...

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

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**Monolingual Nations**

“It is practically impossible to locate a genuinely monolingual country, that is, one that does not contain one or several linguistic minorities whose members use, to some extent at least, both the majority and minority languages. Even in the countries of Europe or of North and South America, which we think of as monolingual, one is hard put to find a truly monolingual nation.”


**The Reality of Multilingualism**

...“It is important to realize that different languages serve different purposes for most multilingual people. The individual typically does not possess the same level or type of proficiency in each language. In addition, language within an individual may grow and decay over time. One or two of them may become stronger, another may weaken. This is even truer of multilinguals than of bilinguals. As opportunities for practice vary and motivations change, so may language dominance. Few individuals live in a situation that allows regular use of their three or more languages over a lifetime.”


**Childhood Trilingualism**

“Since the larger part of the world’s population is bilingual, approximately six out of every ten children grow up speaking two languages. Many acquire at least a passive competence in several languages. In multilingual communities in Africa and Asia, children may learn one or more home languages and others in their neighborhood, school and wider community.

One documented route to trilingualism is parents’ speaking two different languages at home. The children then are educated through a third language. The majority language of the community influences the relative strengths of the languages, and relative proficiency in each of them may also change over time. Stable trilingualism seems less likely than stable bilingualism. Establishing trilingualism early is usually easier than maintaining it over the teenage years. A school where policies are positive towards multilingualism and multiculturalism is needed to ensure a favorable attitude about language ability in children (particularly adolescents).

...One proviso about trilingualism is the necessity, for cognitive growth, of fully developing at least one language at age-appropriate levels. The child will need sufficient competence to operate in the increasingly abstract nature of the school curriculum.”

Bilingual Families Connect
For parents raising bilingual children

Raising multilingual children?
Visit us at www.bilingualfamiliesconnect.com

Bilingual Families Connect is the free online resource where parents can find:

Parent to Parent
Read stories of other multilingual families, including their successes and challenges.

Discussion Forum
Ask your questions and share advice with other parents.

Information
Learn approaches families use and myths about bilingualism and language acquisition.

Resource Links
Locate language-specific sources for free online games and activities for children.

Expert Research
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

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