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Stay Informed

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From the Editors’ Desk...

As with the advice we and our contributing experts often give to parents raising multilingual children (i.e. to give yourself permission to reexamine and adjust your well-laid-out language plans) we have been doing a good amount of reexamination and reassessment here at Multilingual Living Magazine! The last two months have been all about making changes - good changes!

Being that the magazine has been in place for a year, it was very timely that this discussion came about now. The good news for everyone involved is that we are even more dedicated to the vision of this magazine and we have even more exciting plans developing in the wings. We are completely dependent upon our advertisers and your subscription dollars to cover our costs and upon the countless hours of volunteers to keep this magazine (and the Bilingual/Bicultural Family Network) running. If you ever find yourself with more time on your hands than you know what to do with, please know that we are always delighted to have more hands helping out! Have an expertise or just want to get involved? Contact us at: info@biculturalfamily.org!

You will probably notice that our magazine layout has changed. Our goal has always been to get this magazine into print, so please let us know if you have suggestions or tips on how we can make it happen! Let us know what you think of our new layout and design. We are always eager for feedback!

In this issue we focus on the less delightful side of raising multilingual children: struggles, problems, issues, frustrations! Most of us have been through at least a few of these and it is hard for monolingual families to truly understand the heart-pounding moments we sometimes experience when sitting across from a well-meaning practitioner who simply has no idea how to deal with a multilingual child. Reading parenting books intended for monolingual families can cause us to second guess our whole language strategy. If you can relate to such situations, then you are in good company!

This issue of Multilingual Living Magazine should help to remind you that you are not alone, and perhaps will answer some questions that have been on your mind.

And speaking of questions... we are always eager to hear from you! Send us your questions about raising children in more than one language as well as any tips, suggestions, ideas, frustrations and more that are on your mind. In fact, we are so interested in your feedback, we have put together a drawing for FREE BOOKS this issue! Read Suzanne’s article on Siblings and Bilingualism and then enter the drawing - you might be a winner!

Thank you again, everyone, for your submissions, support, kind words, encouragement and dedication. You are the backbone of this publication. We would not be able to do it without you and we will only be able to continue with you on board. Together we ARE changing the world one perception at a time, even if we can’t always see the direct impact!

Wishing us all multilingual lives of peace & wisdom,

Corey & Alice

We look forward to Multilingual Living Magazine becoming an integral part of your life as your trusted, intelligent resource for living a multilingual and multicultural life. Our goal is to empower YOU to make decisions that work for you and your family, to inspire you to embrace the unique circumstances of your life and to help you and your family flourish in your multilingual living.
Meet Mo, Scott and son Zenzo. These photos were taken in Tanzania during a recent trip to visit family. Don't miss our July-August issue to experience their African trip up close and personal!
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**For families in the Seattle, Washington, USA area:**

Center for Multicultural Health helps with filing and consults low-income and median-income families on the new King County children’s health program called “Kids Get Care.” This program is showing to be very effective, as it fills the gap left by the current public coverage programs. If you would like to learn more about this program and enrollment, please call health care advocate Elena Rumiantseva at (206) 461-6910, ext. 230. To learn more about the organization, go to: www.multi-culturalhealth.org.

---

I am having a look at the magazine and I am really thrilled. It is wonderful! Congratulations!


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We’d like to let you know about our partial immersion Spanish language program at The Bilingual Fun Company. We are located in Plymouth, Michigan, USA. Both child and parent/child classes are available. Classes are geared toward children ages 18 months-10 years old. To learn more, check out our website at: www.bilingualfun.com.

Thanks,
Jennifer Manriquez
Founder, The Bilingual Fun Company

---

I am happy that I found your magazine on the web and was happy to subscribe. As my “thirst” for information is still great I was wondering whether you have old issues downloadable for subscribers?

I am looking forward for your response!

Marcel, Netherlands

---

**EDITORS:** Thank you, Marcel, for your subscription! Yes, all subscribers have access to the back issues! Just go to www.biculturalfamily.org/backissues.html. If you do not have the login and password for the back issues, just email us at: info@biculturalfamily.org and we will send that to you right away!

---

A different bilingual angle...

We are bringing up our children bilingually even though both of us grew up monolingually in English (which is perhaps a more difficult type of monolingual than anything else). There’s others like us, some of whom have written online. Our bit is at http://bilingue.shearer.org if you are interested.

Dan and Helen-Jane

---

Hi,
I just wanted to let you know that I made a blog post about your site in case you or your readers are interested in checking it out: http://crosscultural.transycan.net/blog/.

All the best!
Moshu

---

What you’ve created and keep creating is marvelous — the magazine is so rich and not a square-inch of space is wasted with frivolous fillers. Bravo to you and your team!

Maia in Rhode Island, USA
Welcome to the World

A fantastic poster showing 'WELCOME' in 20 different languages and the location where each language is spoken.

More info: www.languageland.co.uk

Opposites Puzzle Cards

Children can practise a variety of basic skills either alone or with partners using these sets of 20 self-checking cardboard puzzles. Cards come in re-sealable plastic cases. Suitable for ages 3+

More info: www.languageland.co.uk

Dear Zoo - Dual Language Book

A wonderful bilingual board book edition of this classic flap book. What is the perfect gift from the zoo? Look under the flap to see the animals that the zoo sends - one is too big, one is too jumpy...but the final one is perfect! Suitable for ages 2+. Available in English with: Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Panjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese.

More info: www.languageland.co.uk

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The Giant Turnip - Dual Language Book

This traditional story is set in an inner city school where the children have grown an enormous turnip! How can they pull it out? First the boys try and then the girls but the turnip will not move. They all try together but the turnip still will not budge. Can Larry save the day? Suitable for ages 3 to 8.

Available in English with: Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, French, German, Gujarati, Italian, Panjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish & Urdu.

More info: www.languageland.co.uk

Spanish ABC Puzzle Blocks

These two-piece wooden puzzles feature fun pictures of an item that begins with each letter and unique die cuts that match the shape of the target letter. Wooden storage box with plastic cover contains 29 two-piece solid wood puzzle blocks measuring 6cm x 8cm each. Set includes all letters of the Spanish alphabet. Suitable for ages 3+.

More info: www.languageland.co.uk

Smart Safari Alphabet Fun Frog

Learning the alphabet has never been so much fun! This happy, croaking frog rolls along on four wheels and dispenses 26 Alphabet Bug disks for letter-recognition games and simple word-building activities. 3.5cm diameter plastic disks store in the frog’s body when not in use. Mechanical frog measures 17.5cm x 15cm x 19cm. Suitable for ages 3+.

More info: www.languageland.co.uk
While multilingualism is literally the gift of tongues that parents, caregivers and teachers can give, it subserves the relationship we have with the children in our lives. Just as anything we want to give our children (our career choice, love of soccer, chess, reading, ballet, etc.), or our hope of what they will become (fine citizens, successful professionals, good friends), nothing is more important or transmits our messages better than our love. If we attempt to force language on children, we will have the same negative affects of trying to shove a certain profession down their throats; they may accept passively, gleefully, or hatefully, but whatever the case, it will be our choice, not theirs, and this is not sustainable.

I recently wrote to some of the most respected names in the field of bilingualism in an attempt to gauge their view of emotions and language learning. Ellen Bialystok (Language Processing in Bilingual Children), Colin Baker (Foundations of Bilingual Education), Edith [Harding] Esch and Philip Riley (The Bilingual Family, A Handbook for Parents) all responded saying that they acknowledge that emotions are important in language acquisition. Baker and Esch and Riley have all raised their children bilingually (Riley, trilingually), though they were not raised bilingual themselves. Esch says, “The issue of emotional factors is of course essential for parent-child relations whether bilingual or not!” and Baker echoed how his own experiences raising his children in Welsh and English were also impacted by emotional ties. Bialystok also acknowledged the importance of social and emotional dimensions of language and language learning.

The environment in which we surround our children impacts how they feel, and how they feel impacts how well they learn. A negative learning environment is one in which the children sense anger, fear, sadness, or disgust. A positive learning environment is one in which the participants sensed joy, surprise, curiosity, and acceptance (Plutchik 1994). “Emotion
plays a clear role in learning the behavior” say neurologists Balkenius, & Morén (2001, p.611), and the choice to use a new language is a desired behavior we as parents hope to encourage. Studies of the brain, best practice in education and good parenting all recognize that learning is both cognitive and affective, involving both the head and the heart. An extreme example of how emotions impact learning is offered by Mel Levine (2002) who suggests that humiliation is the worst thing that can happen to a child. Levine shares case studies of older adults who continually have anxiety symptoms when asked to recall learning experiences that involved being publicly embarrassed by a parent or teacher. On the other extreme, we all learned our first language compelled by the love we feel for our parents.

Emotions are felt in the heart but regulated by the brain. Neurobiological reactions to negative emotions can at the least hinder the uptake of new information, and at the worst, cause permanent blockage for the uptake of information. Positive emotions do the opposite, triggering dopamine and other “happy” neurotransmitters in the brain which can facilitate the cementation of memories in the brain, including new language skills. It stands to reason that any home learning environment which causes a child to feel fear, anxiety or stress will not be as conducive to learning as one which cultivates language through joy, surprise, curiosity, and acceptance. How we make our children feel about their languages is more important than how many opportunities in the day we give him to speak it. As with all skills, if we want to ensure our children learn another language, it should be taught with love.

**REFERENCES:**


Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa is a teacher (pre-kindergarten through university), counselor, researcher, project manager and author. Since 1997 she has conducted workshops for parents, teachers and educational professionals on language, brain development, learning styles, critical thinking, and teaching methodologies in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Norway, Peru, Switzerland, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. She has been acknowledged for her research in various topics, including brain-based teaching methods; motivation and learning; classroom management; the role of emotions in learning; backward curriculum design; syllabus and planning; leaning environments; early childhood education; creativity; human potential; and the evaluation of critical thinking. Tracey is married with three multilingual children (English, Spanish, German and French). She was born and raised in Berkeley, California. Tracey is author of “Raising Multilingual Children: Foreign Language Acquisition and Children (2000),” and *The Multilingual Mind: Questions by, for and about people living with many languages* (2003). Her third book, “Living Languages: Multilingualism across the lifespan,” will be out later this year.
The cherry trees are blossoming and the weather is warming. A fresh, new start to life here in Japan. And so, Bailey begins his pre-school career. The bags have been made, the crayons bought, and everything is neatly labeled and waiting in the corner of the computer room. The school called last week and promised that Bailey’s uniform would be ready for us to pick up by April fifth. I have been studying up on the fine art of bento lunch box making and Bailey’s enthusiasm for riding the “Big Boy Pre-School Bus” is reaching an all time high.

It is all in place and I am finally able to breathe a little sigh of relief. I think everything is ready.

Last night, as I was double-checking the list against the pile in the computer room, Bailey padded in.

“Hey there,” I smiled, inviting him to sit on my lap, “Wanna help?”

“Okay,” he shrugged.

“Alright, then. Can you find the crayons?”

Holding them up into the air, he said, “Check!”

“Now, how about the scissors?”

“Here!”

“And, the pencil box?”

Bailey hesitated and then looked up at me with those big, brown eyes and asked, “Mommy, what if they ask me to say my ABCs at pre-school?”

“Well, you know your ABCs so that shouldn’t be a problem.” I reassured him.

His finger was tracing over the label on his pencil box. He traced the B and then the A and then stopped.

“Mommy, why is this ABC? Write my name in Japanese. I don’t want ABCs!” he announced tossing the pencil box aside.

“You know what Bailey,” I said not really knowing what would come out next, “Some people have blue eyes like their Daddy or are short like their Mommy. Blue eyes aren’t bad and being short isn’t either.”

Bailey wrinkled his nose, but didn’t say anything so I continued.

“You got the ABC part of you from your Mommy and the Japanese part of you from your Daddy. Let’s make another Japanese label for your things and we can put it right next the ABC label. That way you won’t forget the Japanese or the American part of you. Deal?”

“Deal,” he squealed with laughter.

I finished up the last of the labels in the wee hours of the morning. I stretched and thought to myself: at least it is over. I thought getting things ready would be challenging, but it seems like the challenges are just beginning.

---

**Of Cherry Blossoms and Pencil Boxes**

**Combining cultures at school**

**BY TRISHA YONEKURA**

---

Baily’s mother, Trisha Yonekura, is an American married to a Japanese. She and her family live in Japan. You can learn more about her and her family at: [baileyandsophie.blogspot.com](http://baileyandsophie.blogspot.com)
Bilingual and Dyspraxic... But Fantastic!

When language is more than meets the eye

BY HELEN PEACOCK

Multilingual beginnings
As a young languages (French, German and Spanish) student from New Zealand having recently arrived in the polyglot’s paradise that is Europe, it was truly a dream come true to find myself in 1990 living near Paris with a French husband, a translating and interpreting job, and many international friends. The next step in my dream was to raise bi- or even multilingual children.

When my son Kevin was born, almost thirteen years ago, my French husband and I always spoke only French to each other. The husband regrets this now and believes we should have made more of an effort to improve his English! My daughter Pauline was born 11 years ago. I spoke only English to my beautiful babies, for two reasons. Firstly, I knew that by acquiring English naturally from birth, it would be much easier for them later in life not to have to learn it with the formal and old-fashioned methods still used in French schools. Secondly, on a more personal note, it simply wouldn’t have felt natural for me to speak French to them, despite my own fluency.

At first, both Kevin and Pauline spoke mostly English, naturally enough, as I was a stay-at-home mum. They progressed to equal amounts
of French and English for about two years, because they were hearing so much French spoken between their father and I. However that changed radically, to my great disappointment, when they started école maternelle (preschool) at the age of three. From then on, both children were more comfortable speaking only French with each other and their little friends. I continued to speak only English with them, but they now answered me in French. Even after three trips (in the space of nine years) to see my family in New Zealand, they continued speaking French, although they clearly absorbed all the English they heard. To my astonishment, upon returning to France after our third trip to New Zealand (when they were 11 and 9 years old), they began to speak English with me full-time, and even with each other - I was delighted! All the years of my private disappointment were swept away overnight.

I am monumentally lazy and never tried ‘bilingualising’ my children with a scholarly approach. Apart from speaking, playing games, singing nursery rhymes and reading English stories to them, I never formally taught them any grammar or spelling. Indeed when it began to dawn on me that Kevin was having enough difficulty with French grammar (not to mention maths and science), I deliberately decided not to teach him any English grammar, figuring it was more important to let him concentrate on one thing at a time. In spite of my appalling neglect, Kevin has turned out to be much better at English spelling than Pauline, although she is more gifted verbally.

Allow me to splurge precious column inches with an appealing anecdote about Kevin as a toddler: he obviously felt strongly that English was exclusively Mummy’s, and French was for Papa, Méemée and Pépé, his French grandparents. He clearly disapproved when those borders were transgressed! My stolidly monolingual French father-in-law can manage one English expression only: “What is it?” As a joke, Pépé used to say it from time to time, in his strong French accent: “What eez eet?” and little Kevin would fly into a rage! He would shout “NON Pépé, c’est MAMAN!” Equally, Kevin would get very upset when, to be polite in the company of French people, I addressed him in French.

**Dyspraxia diagnosis**

Kevin was a delightful, gurgling, affectionate baby. After doing some reading on bilingual children, I fully expected him to start speaking somewhat later than the average monolingual child. Looking back now (what a horribly accurate, but frustrating tool hindsight can be!), I realise that he was slow to develop not only speech, but also physical coordination and fine motor skills. I blame my astounding lack of observation of my own son on my egocentric introspection (exacerbated by long term post-natal depression), and the absence of an older child for comparison. After twelve frustrating years of not understanding why Kevin was somewhat clumsy, ‘floppy’ and struggling at school, he was finally diagnosed as dyspraxic by friends in New Zealand just last year.
I had never heard of dyspraxia. All my New Zealand friends seemed to know about it! His French neurologist, who is now organising further tests and will prescribe therapy for Kevin very soon, explained to me that dyspraxia is still relatively unknown in France, especially within the education system. She estimates that France is about ten years behind Anglophone countries in dyspraxia awareness and recognition. I can’t help feeling that if I had raised my children in New Zealand, Kevin might have been diagnosed much earlier, simply because I would have been more aware of this neurological condition. So in this way I do feel that his bilingualism may have contributed in part to the delayed dyspraxia diagnosis. By this I mean that we (and our paediatrician) were expecting him to speak later than monolingual children of the same age, so we felt it was entirely normal that he would speak a little later. I don’t believe Kevin’s speech was delayed by his bilingualism, or perhaps only by a few months. I am sure now that Kevin’s speech delay was mainly caused by his dyspraxia. I believe the main reasons for his late dyspraxia diagnosis are (a) he was my first child - I had no point of comparison, (b) my own lack of knowledge about dyspraxia, and (c) all of his teachers’ ignorance of dyspraxia.

Dyspraxia has many symptoms and behaviours (see sidebar). Kevin’s case, simply put, is that he has two neurological problems. Firstly, his brain does not always correctly process what his eyes are seeing; and secondly, the messages from his brain to his nerves are not always successfully transmitted. This explains why he took longer than most children to learn to speak, write and draw, use a knife and fork, tie his shoe laces, climb on furniture, swim and ride a bike. He frequently bumps into things, spills his drinks and food, and often has excess saliva in his mouth. His immediate memory is not reliable, so he interrupts us all the time, because he knows he will forget what he wants to say. All this has made for a colourful, if difficult, family life over the last thirteen years!

Any parent who suspects a child may have a learning disorder or

---

**Definition of Dyspraxia:**

The Dyspraxia Foundation defines dyspraxia as ‘an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement’ and, in many individuals, there may be associated problems with language, perception and thought. It is thought to affect up to 10% of the population in varying degrees.

- Dyspraxia is a neurologically based developmental disability which is present from birth.
- Dyspraxia is a motor planning disorder, not a muscular deficit. A child knows what they want their body to do but can’t get their body to do it.
- Dyspraxia is a hidden handicap. Children with this disability appear the same as any other child. It is only when a skill is performed that the disability is noticeable.
- Approximately 70% of those affected are boys.
- Dyspraxia does not impact on intelligence, children with Dyspraxia have average or above average intelligence.
- Dyspraxia can impact on behaviour and social skills.
- Dyspraxia is a specific learning disability.
- You do not grow out of dyspraxia: if you have it as a child you will have it throughout your life.

*Source:*  
[www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk)
Developmental problems should get as many professional opinions as possible. If there is a dyspraxia association with a website in your country of residence, it may give a list of all the official procedures to follow. My first step after the “informal” diagnosis in New Zealand was to find a hospital near Paris specialising in learning disorders. We had a consultation with a neurologist, who required Kevin to have his IQ tested by a psychologist first, before meeting us. Next Kevin had a brain scan, which revealed “some anomalies”. Now she has prescribed two more consultations with specialists: neuro-ophtalmological and ergotherapeutic. These exams will, in theory, confirm her diagnosis, and enable her to prescribe the correct ergotherapy (physical therapy). The good news is that long term ergotherapy can be beneficial to the brain, just as it is for stroke victims, so Kevin has a potential for improvement.

**Kevin’s Future**

It is vital that I keep trying to educate Kevin’s teachers, sports coaches and all our friends, because dyspraxia is known as a ‘hidden handicap’. Kevin needs people to be patient with him, and understand why he can’t do certain things as quickly as other children. Dyspraxic children seem normal, but suffer from being told they are lazy, slow or stupid (I am cringingly, shamefully guilty of this). They use huge amounts of energy just keeping up with the others. Once I changed my attitude towards Kevin and became more patient and understanding, our relationship improved overnight! Now his confidence is increasing too. With lots of physical therapy and remedial teaching for his schoolwork he should eventually be able to catch up. It’s going to be a long hard slog, because the educational system in France is so much more demanding than in New Zealand or the UK. The hardest part is the guilt I feel over having treated him as a ‘naughty’ boy for so many years. I’m having trouble forgiving myself, but have to look to the future now and help him as much as I can.

It is somewhat ironic that Kevin’s excellent English abilities have boosted his overall mean scores at school, perhaps giving a sort of ‘false positive’. It is quite clear these mean scores would have been much lower without his high marks in English. He is still very shy at school, but being top of the class in English has done wonders for his morale and self-esteem. So looking back, I’m very happy I persisted in speaking only English with him, in spite of his other difficulties. It was not a conscious decision, but an instinctive one. Thank Goddess for feminine intuition!

* A detailed list of symptoms can be found on my blog at: kevinandpauline.blogspot.com/2006/08/dyspraxic-but-fantastic.html
As a professional counselor, one of the questions clients often ask is “how do we tell if our conflict comes from cultural differences or psychological issues that come from life experiences?” Culture is learned. So are family dynamics. Neither is static.

Every family has its unique experience of psychological, socioeconomic, political, safe or traumatic immigration experiences. When you are trying to decide if a conflict with your spouse is cultural or psychological, assume the stronger your emotional response to the conflict, the more likely some psychological factors are involved.

Here is an example: John and Inez have been successful in raising their children bilingually until recently when Christien, their seven-year-old, entered second grade. Both John and Inez strongly agree their family cultures value education. In John’s family excellent grades were essential; in Inez’s family enjoying life is part of education. They have increasing conflict and stalled negotiation over educational preparation and achievement of their two children Christien 7 and Marie 4. How can this couple navigate John’s demand to spend more time after school with homework studies with Inez who wants a balance of play and study?
Friends tried to reassure John and Inez that their conflict over after school study could be explained by the cultural backgrounds; John is from Boston Mass, USA and Inez is from Buenos Aires, Argentina. Uptight New Englander versus fun-loving Latina?

I asked John and Inez to explain how they got their views on education and study by talking about family expectations beginning with grandparents. John’s family story is the Immigrant “American success” story with the legacy that hard work prevents poverty. John is a third-generation Irish American whose grandparents immigrated to the US in the 1930’s with minimal education. They worked very hard, had little, but offered John’s father a better life than they had. John’s father worked hard all through school to get and maintain his full scholarship and was the first person in the family to finish college. When John was 12, his father died suddenly, and John, too, had to work very hard to win the scholarship which allowed him to go to college. John’s personal experience and family history left him feeling that to be a good parent he should be very strict on academic preparedness. Talking about his family experience of struggle and the fear sudden loss could happen to his children made John rethink his stand. His insight about his overzealous approach to education allowed him and Inez to negotiate an acceptable solution.

One of the greatest gifts of bicultural relationships is the creative flexibility you gain when you embrace learning two cultures, two (or more) languages, because you need to really HEAR each other and negotiate your family culture. Staying present with your spouse day to day to hear and understand in our busy lives can also be taxing. We are all human and can slip a bit in our “hearing” of the other. Sometimes it is easier to just assume a conflict is cultural when it is something psychological from your personal experience. When you have conflict and the cultural difference conversation just doesn’t work to evoke a resolution, go to the personal experience question “why is this so important”? Be gentle with yourselves in looking at both the cultural and psychological aspects of conflict. It may be you just need to spend more time listening and exploring why this subject is so difficult for the two of you. If it is too sensitive to sort out alone, consider seeing a professional counselor who has experience working with bicultural relationships.

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Let me start with a disclaimer: I am not a speech therapist. So why, you may ask, am I writing a piece about speech therapy? There are two reasons. One is that I am a parent of three trilingual children, in a mixed family which is the first multilingual household among monolingual households from both sides of our extended family. The other reason is that I am also a linguist, currently teaching a postgraduate course in Speech-Language Therapy. As a parent, my experience of assertions about speech disruption directed at my children, not least from caring relatives and friends, is likely to mirror that of many other parents of multilingual children. As an academic, my work gives me insider insight into what speech-language therapists are required to know and to do, particularly in multilingual Singapore where I live, a country with four official languages and where individual multilingualism is the norm.

In this article, I’ll attempt to walk you through what counts as speech-language delay, and through the reasons (or lack of them) to seek professional help for your child. I take the word multilingual to refer to users of more than one language, thereby including, of course, bilinguals. I use the terms speech-language therapist and client in their technical senses, to refer to clinicians and their patients, respectively.
ASSessment

In order to make a decision about whether something requires remediation, you need first to make an assessment. And in order to assess, you need to compare. You can’t decide that something needs attention if you don’t know that certain other things, by comparison, do not need attention.

Things that do not need attention are what we call norms, and which we therefore see no reason to worry about because their usual, routine, standard, well-known recurrence has habituated us to their ‘normality’.

We all let norms guide our appreciation of daily experiences, whether we’re aware of doing so or not. You immediately know that something funny may be going on if your friend greets you with a frown instead of the usual smile, or if a blizzard hits you as you sunbathe in the peak of summer. The reason for your bafflement is that you have developed a norm, based on repeated previous observations, which allows you to recognise a deviation from what you’ve learned to expect, and which allows you to suspect that there could be reason for concern.

The issue of assessment is straightforward with your own children too. Say one day you notice that your child has a swelling on her lip, or lacks his appetite, or is stuttering, things that were not there before. Your child-norm kicks in and does its job of putting you on alert, because you instinctively compare this new version of your child with the version that you’re familiar with. What you are doing is comparing your child with itself, that is, your current observation with your expected observation of the same thing, just like you compared the friend with the friend and the weather with the weather. You are gathering information in order to assess an unusual experience. What you do not do, in contrast, is rush to the conclusion that your child, your friend or the weather have gone haywire. You go on observing, and asking yourself questions to test successive hypotheses that you then accept or reject on the basis of further observation and further knowledge that you gain: is the swollen lip growing bigger, redder? Did you perhaps unwittingly offend your friend? How stable has the weather been in this particular resort lately?

Things get rather more complicated when assessment involves norms which you haven’t helped develop yourself, because they concern situations of which you have no first-hand experience. Say you find out that there are norms for how children’s motor skills develop, or for when they start using subordinate clauses in their speech. Someone else, not you, developed these norms, which are based on observations of other children, not your children. So if someone wants to assess your child against these norms, this means that your child now requires comparison with other children, and that you have no say in the testing procedure because you lack the specialised knowledge which was used to norm that testing procedure. You are simply told that certain norms exist and that your child should therefore be assessed against them. You are often not told how these norms came about, and you are definitely not told that these norms are norms for those who decided that those norms should be norms, if you’ll pardon the apparent truism. What people don’t seem to realise too often is that there would be no norms if people simply didn’t agree on why we need norms and what should constitute them. In other words, norms are conventions.

The first thing you should ask yourself is: how were these norms developed? Who decided that they are norms, based on what evidence? The
reason you should take a moment to wonder about this, or even take action in order to find answers to these questions, is that no-one wants to be told that they or someone very dear to them is ‘abnormal’, ‘atypical’, ‘deviant’, or even ‘different’. (An aside: for all our much-vaunted individual creativity, what human beings really want is to be like someone else, and preferably be shown, by someone else, the way to become so.) You don't want to be told this especially by someone in power, i.e. someone accredited to tell you so, and especially if these labels cannot apply to you, or your child, because the norm was normed for something that has nothing to do with your particular situation. We all want to be ‘normal’, i.e. within the norms. This is fine, but we need to find norms that reflect our own normality. Let's see what ‘normal’ means, first for language development in general, and then for multilingual language development.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

It is interesting to observe that everybody claims entitlement to assessing everybody else's uses of language: “Youths can’t speak properly any more”, “You should learn good English”, “He used the wrong word there”. It is always a matter of right versus wrong, us versus them, and we always forget that statements like these involve the assumption of a norm, especially when they are uttered by people invested with authority, linguistic or otherwise. We also forget that if they don’t speak like us, then this must mean that we don't speak like them either. In other words, what's going on is that we all speak differently because we all follow different norms. People who only know about their own norms find this exceedingly difficult to accept, and we all know how ignorance is the prime breeder of intolerance. In particular, as I will discuss below, people who are only familiar with monolingual norms cannot of course do better than to apply these norms when judging multilingual uses of language.

Let's start with language development in general. Language assessment professionals make a very important distinction between speech, on the one hand, and language, on the other. Speech has to do with human anatomy and physiology. It is a motor activity involving sophisticated coordination of breathing and of many different muscles in order to articulate sounds. Language is a system of conventional vocabulary, grammatical and pragmatic devices through which we represent the world around us and communicate our experiences to each other. It is a cognitive and social tool. This means that speech and language are independent of one another, which in turn means that speech delays cannot be caused by language, nor vice-versa. In the case of multilingual children, speech delays cannot therefore be caused by the number of languages that they speak.

A speech delay is one thing, a language delay is another. You can find the same features of speech in children using one or more languages. One of my children lisped his way through his three languages up to age 6, when this very heavy feature of his speech disappeared on its own virtually overnight. You can also find the same features of language in children with fluent speech in one or several languages. Small children can spend their days chatting away in impeccable speech in all their languages, but no child will understand or use passive constructions and metaphors in any language at age 2.

The issue here is diagnosis, that is, the recognition that something may or may not be amiss. A feature of language or speech can only be diagnosed as a clinical issue depending on other factors like, for example, the
child’s overall motor or cognitive development. A child who cannot hold her head up on her own, because she’s too young to do so, or because her brain is damaged, is not likely to be able to control her speech organs either. A child who doesn’t show interest in pretend-play, for the same reasons, is not likely to realise that using a language properly in fact means playing a game where you need to learn its rules if you want to make yourself understood. More generally, the child’s overall state of health must be excluded as a factor affecting speech-language development. So before taking your child to the speech therapist, make sure that regular paediatric screenings vouch for your child’s normal health.

Deafness, for example, is a very common cause of speech-language delay, associated with unintelligible speech: the child can’t produce what he can’t hear. Deafness is also very difficult to notice in a very young child, so medical assistance is definitely needed here.

**BUT WHAT IS SPEECH ‘DELAY’?**

Having excluded health factors that may impair linguistic development, specialised knowledge of typical developmental milestones comes in, as well as knowledge that these milestones are guidelines, not rules of behaviour to be expected or enforced without exception. A competent speech-language clinician knows two things. First, that norms guiding linguistic assessment are devised, just like your own everyday norms, through repeated observations and generalisation of these observations. And second, therefore, that “the Average Child is a fiction, a descriptive convenience like the Average Man or the Average Woman”, as child language researchers Elizabeth Bates, Philip Dale and Donna Thal have put it. One child may learn vocabulary very fast, in any language, and take a long time to sort out word-endings in the same language(s), whereas another child may find ways of engaging with his learning in exactly the opposite way. A normed average is a useful fiction (we all want to be normal), but nonetheless a fiction (we are all individuals).

Speech-language diagnoses, also like everyday ones, proceed through comparison. And this is why a clinician’s intervention, whether in language or otherwise, is both a science and an art. The science of it gives the necessary technical knowledge and tools, but the art of it gives the no less crucial insight that the client before you is an individual, with a particular history, a particular problem, and in need of tailor-made support as a human being.

The therapist will naturally look for a ‘problem’, because this is why you decided to seek counsel in the first place. This means that the therapist will look for what is not there, in your child’s speech. But the therapist will of course also look for what is there, because you can’t found a prospective therapy on nothing. What your child can do with his language(s) will provide the basis for what he will be able to achieve at different stages in the course of the therapy sessions. You can do your part too, by paying attention to what your child does do in all his languages, instead of perhaps concentrating on what he fails to do in one particular language.

The therapist first compares your child with itself, to ascertain whether his use of language is developing and, if so, how. Parental information is crucial here, and your job in assisting a therapist is to be objective. Diagnosis begins at home, for the simple reason that no one knows your child better than you. Does your child use more words now than he did a few weeks ago? Can he understand complex instructions? In which language(s)? Does he use language differently to different people?

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A Journey of Thoughts
The continuum of language and culture

BY SANTI DHARMAPUTRA

The decision to raise our kids trilingually was initially motivated by my own life experience, while readings on multilingual matters brought me to a process of self-discovery. Seeing that my husband’s career requires us to constantly move from one country to another, I consider my own experience useful for a starting point to raise our kids.
LANGUAGES
Since I was born to Indonesian parents in Jakarta, my first language is Indonesian. We moved to Wassenaar (the Netherlands) when I was 4 years old and Dutch then became my second language as I was sent to a local school. Three years later, we moved to Damascus (Syria). During our stay in Damascus, my Dutch was not maintained. I went to Indonesian school and was introduced to English at summer International school. Eventually we returned to Jakarta when I was 10.

After two years of adjustment, I finally felt comfortable speaking Indonesian with the Jakarta dialect. English was very present in Jakarta and so easy to keep up by taking courses. I also took some Dutch courses for a year, but it was harder for me to develop much as there was almost no exposure to Dutch in Indonesia. At age 20, I went to New Orleans (Louisiana, USA) to take English as a Second Language courses for 6 months. It was a booster for my English, and I felt very confident communicating in English ever since.

At age 24, I received a scholarship to study in Amsterdam (the Netherlands). The program was in English. I started to take Dutch courses (where I met my future husband) to restore my archaic Dutch. While we lived in the Netherlands, I never stopped taking Dutch courses and regained the language by the time we moved to Illinois, USA when I was 29. Adjusting to American English was not a problem.

THIRD CULTURE KID (TCK)
I have typical features of a TCK. During my long residence in Jakarta, I never really felt connected to every aspect of my culture. I constantly craved to go abroad. My childhood memories followed me and I felt homesick for Wassenaar and Damascus. People always saw me as ‘different’ from the way I moved, behaved and gave opinions.

My 6-month stay in New Orleans was an awesome experience as I met students from different countries. I remembered turning my head each time Dutch, German or French students were speaking. I often mingled with students from Europe because I felt comfortable being among them. It seems the instinct came from my childhood experience in the Netherlands. Even though I didn’t speak Arabic, I listened eagerly to Arabic spoken by Middle Eastern students and enthusiastically followed the ‘Arab Night’ organized by the university.

Although I didn’t go to local school in Damascus and had very little contact with the locals, there was some impact of having lived in an Arab country. Middle Eastern music and culture never raised my eyebrows wherever I encounter them. The food brings flashes of memories of crossing the desert during my childhood.

While staying in Amsterdam, I felt home. I felt very familiar with everything. I was not Dutch, but couldn’t help to love the country that gave me happy childhood memories.

Adjustment during my childhood years was unpleasant. In Damascus my lack of understanding of Indonesian became the object of mockery at the Indonesian school. I was spending 2 lonesome school years in Jakarta because I was considered to behave and speak weird. But being a TCK also has advantages. The experience of moving and meeting different kinds of people made me able to see things from different angles; I accept things when the majority doesn’t and vice versa. I feel comfortable being with people from other ethnic groups and nationalities and don’t feel disturbed by foreign languages. I have no fear of a new environment and look forward to new things to learn.

SELF DISCOVERY
Initially I never really gave a thought why people considered me different. I started to think about it when going back to the Netherlands at age 24. At that time, it was very weird to know how much I felt home in Amsterdam although my limited Dutch became an obstacle for me to totally blend in. But I was very motivated to regain the language and worked very hard. I couldn’t stop but think: if I had
maintained my Dutch after I left the Netherlands as a child, the process would have been easier for me. I tried to be like the natives, but I was never and will never be considered as Dutch. Even after I finally spoke Dutch pretty fluently, people always tended to reply in English.

Another inspiration came from my German supervisor at work who was married to a Frenchman and raised her kids multilingually. I didn’t have a child yet at the time, but having a multicultural marriage myself (my husband is French) and hearing of another mixed couple successfully raising their kids multilingually attracted my attention very much. When I got pregnant with my first son, my husband and I thought we should speak our native languages to him. I barely speak French, my husband hardly speaks Indonesian. I just did what seemed right since I hadn’t read anything about multilingualism yet.

Moving to the United States gave me a chance to learn more about multilingualism. Being a stay-home-mom gave me plenty of time to work on my abandoned interest: languages. I read lots of books and journals on multilingualism. I came to realize that raising kids trilingually is a long-life commitment with lots of hard work involved. It’s not an impossible mission, but never-ending homework should be done. The readings have made me confident of our choice to raise our kids trilingually.

Multilingual readings lead me to the TCK issue. I was 31 years old when reading books about it and it was a breakthrough for me. Finally I was able to identify myself: I’m not weird, I’m just a person who was spending part of her childhood years in more than one country! I never felt so good about myself ... all those feelings of confusion, homesickness and alienation are just normal for a TCK.

After that I came into the subject of being multiracial. I am not of mixed origins and both my parents are Indonesians. But multiracial readings had awakened me to the issue that: gosh my children are multiracial! I’m Asian, my husband is biracial Caucasian and African, so my children will look as if they come from everywhere but at the same time from nowhere. Suddenly another realization came: we are still moving from country to country, our children are born from parents of different ethnic groups and nationalities and they will speak at least 3 languages. This means our kids are TCKs who are multiracial and multilingual.

Memories of my own life experience were flashing through my mind. I’m just an adult TCK and I’ve been experiencing lots of restlessness throughout my life. What about my children? They might encounter more than what I’ve been through, more exciting life experience and perhaps more tears and confusion as well. All these thoughts plus my increasing interest towards multilingualism, multiculturalism and TCK-issues motivated me to keep learning about these subjects. I want to be able to understand my family and my children better. Slowly I started to be in contact with other people with the same passion and situation as me. It’s nice to know those families as their stories motivate me to improve what I’m doing. The process of knowing myself and learning to understand my children’s situation makes my life more meaningful. I hope I will be able to provide my children with enough pride and understanding of who they are, for them to embrace all excitements and challenges in their life.

Santi Dharmaputra, a stay-at-home-mom, currently lives with her husband and 2 kids in Woodridge, Illinois. Read her experience at: trilingual.livejournal.com/
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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

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What Is “Home?”

Creating an identity

BY DINKA SOUZEK

An immigrant will have an advantage in the realm of defining home, because unlike most people, he has a choice. Not all options are open, as we all have to be born and grow up somewhere, but the immigrant at some point in his life will have the choice to call several places home or at least something similar to that. I have agonized over this for years, on and off, depending on what stage or situation of life I was in. Obviously my home was my immediate family and it will always be, but what about the actual places of growing up, the friendships, the language, the certain kind of humor, the mentality, the “this-is-how-we-do-it”? After emigrating the first time, the distinction was clear: I feel really comfortable around people of the same origin as me, but I live my life somewhere else – and I like it. After emigrating the second time, it started to be confusing, because it felt the same:
I feel really comfortable around people of both my origins but I live somewhere else and I like it. It's true, you can spin this indefinitely, but in a way I feel I am adding identities and at times it makes me feel like a traitor... or more like a multiple personality? I don’t know.

I decided to remove myself from the “dark side” of this dilemma. The side that tells me that I can only be ONE thing otherwise I’m just fooling myself. The side that pressures me to choose, because otherwise I'm betraying family and friends. The side that wants to make me judge people so I can decide that “my people” are the really normal, smart and fun ones and the others might be ok at times, but are not the real thing. That side will always be there; as far as that is concerned I will not be fooling myself, but the bright side of my situation is just, well, too bright.

I came to like people too much. I really do like them. It’s exciting to start your life in an unfamiliar environment, because I can guarantee you will not be disappointed. People are just great. What a naïve, empty and blank statement, you might think. But that feeling of togetherness, the connection you felt with your first set of friends, the insider jokes you had, the music you listened to, the places you enjoyed... you really can find it again. You observe people and you learn and soon you participate in their own unique corner of the universe, in their language and in their culture, and at some point you can fit right in and realize: This is it! Home! I found it... Thousands of miles away from where you first experienced it. I know it sounds corny and old but that's because we are used to hearing this watered-down in stupid songs. Songs that try to evoke a shallow feeling of unity and brotherhood - only at a safe distance of anybody or anything strange or difficult. There IS a unity, though, and to experience that - all sugarcoated “we-are-the-world” emotions aside - is exhilarating and empowering.

Being an immigrant is not easy, but letting go of your “must-haves” and opening your eyes to what's in front of you will not make you lose anything but just gain a unique perspective that you as a human being really do fit anywhere.

I do miss my “homes.” I miss my relatives in Croatia and hanging out with them. I miss continuing my life with them, not being present for the everyday stuff. I miss my friends in Austria, the towns, the landscape and yes, the food. I miss my friends in Spain, life there is really something else. I feel torn, but it’s not a bad feeling. On one hand I feel I should go back to all these place to catch up, on the other hand I feel I should go somewhere else and go through that whole experience again: being a stranger, learning how to live in a new place, learning the laws of the culture, becoming used to things, starting to like things, and eventually feeling like a part of it all. Sometimes I get so excited about it that I feel as if it's almost a responsibility for me to learn all the existing languages and visit all the places there are in the world. Just so I can repeatedly prove my theory that people really are the same and I can be at home wherever I want to. ☝
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François Grosjean’s favorite myths about bilingualism

Don’t let yourself be caught by these misconceptions!  BY FRANÇOIS GROSJEAN

Every researcher on bilingualism has his or her list of myths about bilingualism; many can be found on the web. Here are François Grosjean’s, the author of the now classic, Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism (Harvard University Press, 1982).
Bilingualism is rare.
WRONG.
It has been estimated that more than half the world’s population is bilingual, that is lives with two or more languages. Bilingualism is found in all parts of the world, at all levels of society, in all age groups.

Bilinguals have equal and perfect knowledge of their languages.
WRONG.
This is a myth that has had a long life! In fact, bilinguals know their languages to the level that they need them. Some bilinguals are dominant in one language, others do not know how to read and write one of their languages, others have only passive knowledge of a language and, finally, a very small minority, have equal and perfect fluency in their languages. What is important to keep in mind is that bilinguals are very diverse, as are monolinguals.

Real bilinguals have acquired their two or more languages in childhood.
WRONG.
One can become bilingual in childhood, but also in adolescence and in adulthood. In fact, many adults become bilingual because they move from one country, or region, to another and have to acquire a second language. With time, they can become just as bilingual as children who acquire their languages in their early years (minus the native speaker accent). In general, people become bilingual because life requires the use of two or more languages. This can be due to immigration, education, intermarriage, contact with other linguistic groups within a country, etc.

Real bilinguals have no accent in their different languages.
WRONG.
Having an accent or not in a language does not make you more or less bilingual. It depends on when you acquired your languages. In fact, some extremely fluent and balanced bilinguals have an accent in the one, or the other, language; other, less fluent, bilinguals may have no accent at all.

Bilinguals are born translators.
WRONG.
Even though bilinguals can translate simple things from one language to another, they often have difficulties with more specialized domains. The reaction people have is almost always, “But I thought you were bilingual!”. In fact, bilinguals use their languages in different situations, with different people, in different domains of life (this is called the complementarity principle). Unless they learned their languages formally (in school, for example), they often do not have translations equivalents in the other language.
Mixing languages is a sign of laziness in bilinguals. **WRONG.**

Mixing languages such as code-switching and borrowing is a very common behavior in bilinguals speaking to other bilinguals. It is a bit like having coffee with milk instead of just straight black. The two language repertoires are available in bilingual situations and can be used at will. Many expressions and words are better said in the one or the other language; mixing allows to use the right one without having recourse to translation which simply does not do justice to what one wants to express. This said, in other situations, bilinguals know that they cannot mix their languages (e.g. when speaking to monolinguals) and they stick then to just one language.

All bilinguals are also bicultural. **WRONG.**

Even though many bilinguals are also bicultural (they interact with two cultures and combine aspects of each), many others are monocultural (e.g. the inhabitants in the German speaking part of Switzerland who often acquire three or four languages during their youth). Thus one can be bilingual without being bicultural just as one can be monolingual and bicultural (e.g. the British who live in the USA).

Bilinguals have double or split personalities. **WRONG.**

Bilinguals, like monolinguals, adapt their behavior to different situations and people. This often leads to a change of language in bilinguals (e.g. a Japanese-English bilingual speaking Japanese to her grandmother and English to her sister). This change of language has led to the idea that bilinguals are “different” when speaking the one, or the other, language. But like monolinguals, it is the situation or the person one is speaking to which induces slight changes in behavior, opinions, feelings, etc., not the fact that one is bilingual.

Bilingualism will delay language acquisition in children. **WRONG.**

This is a myth that was popular back in the middle of the 20th Century. Since then much research has shown that bilingual children are not delayed in their language acquisition. This said, one should keep in mind that bilingual children, because they have to deal with two or more languages, are different in some ways from monolingual children, but definitely not on rate of language acquisition. As for bilingual children with language challenges (e.g. dyslexia), they are not proportionally more numerous than monolingual children with the same challenges.
If you want your child to grow up bilingual, use the one-person-one language approach.

**WRONG.**

There are many ways of making sure a child grows up bilingual: caretaker 1 speaks one language and caretaker 2 speaks the other; one language is used in the home and the other outside the home; the child acquires his/her second language at school, etc. The critical factor is NEED. The child must come to realize, most of the time unconsciously, that he/she needs two or more languages in everyday life. This is where the one person - one language approach often breaks down as the bilingual child quickly realizes that the weaker (often minority) language is not really needed (the caretakers or other family members often speak the other, stronger language, to one another, so why keep up the weaker language?). A better approach is that all family members use the weaker language at home, if at all possible, so as to increase the child’s exposure to it and mark the language’s “main” territory.

When children grow up bilingual, they mix their languages.

**WRONG.**

If bilingual children interact in both bilingual and monolingual situations, then they learn to mix languages at certain times only. When they are with monolinguals (e.g. Grandma who doesn’t speak any English), they quickly learn to speak just the one language (communication breaks down otherwise). It is important though that the situation be  truly monolingual (and not a “pretend situation” in which a bilingual parent pretends not to know the other language); children will make an effort to speak only one language if they feel it is vital for communication. Thus, caretakers will want to create natural monolingual environments where children will need, and hence use, just one language.

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**Further Reading:**

An interview with François Grosjean on bilingualism can be found at the following sites: [www2.unine.ch/Jahia/site/ltlp/cache/offone/lang/en/pid/4140;jsessionid=7019AD26638332A5C01C7DF15A48C60C](www2.unine.ch/Jahia/site/ltlp/cache/offone/lang/en/pid/4140;jsessionid=7019AD26638332A5C01C7DF15A48C60C)

OR

[www.bilingualfamiliesconnect.com/An%20Interview%20of%20Francois%20Grosjean%20on%20Bilingualism.pdf](www.bilingualfamiliesconnect.com/An%20Interview%20of%20Francois%20Grosjean%20on%20Bilingualism.pdf)

Bilingualism is a fascinating subject to study. Parents and researchers lucky enough to witness the emergence of two or three languages are captivated by the ease the young child picks up and acquires a whole system of grammar in few years. Most parents would agree that the wonder of emerging speech is greatest with the first child; the first ‘mama’ or ‘dada’, the first naming of objects and the first sentences that we note in the baby’s scrapbook. New parents might have some concern whether the child will ever talk fluently or use two or more languages, and these fears are assuaged as the child’s speech develops over the first two to five years.

Often when a new brother or sister arrives we pay less attention to the new sibling’s language progress. Parents have more confidence that their second or third child will speak both languages as well as the first-born did. They agree that their strategy of passing on language was a success, and they will keep going with it. They are delighted to watch the big brother or sister ‘teach’ the new baby words or songs that they taught the first baby just a few years ago.

Siblings change the balance of the family; instead of two adults talking to a child we have two children talking to two adults and to each other. An only child has more adult conversation to listen to and react to, whereas siblings spend more time talking to each other. Usually the siblings choose to speak one language between themselves, most often the language of school or their community, or to code-switch or mix languages. We may find our children use languages differently, or rebel against one. A sibling will correct another’s mispronunciation or languages misunderstandings, sometimes in a kind way, other times to upset the brother or sister.

Studies on bilingual children usually report on only one child. Why is
this so when a large number of families have two or more children? Firstly, it is much easier to track and analyze the words of only one child, especially when the researchers have to transcribe phonetically or tape normal speech. With an adult-child or a researcher-child dialogue the conversation can be regulated while tests are administered. The conversation of child talking to other children, especially siblings, with their fast-paced playground slang, made-up words and expressions or words only they understand can be elusive. Secondly, it is not easy to find suitable siblings to study for comparative testing either. Researchers need to find children that ‘match’ in terms of the same languages, age, gender, schooling and other factors, which might affect the statistical outcome of the study.

Therefore, we usually read about siblings in case studies of two or three children done by parents who are often linguists. These detailed biographical notes give us a unique insight into the developing speech within the framework of the home. One famous study was by Werner Leopold (1939-1949) who did a 10-year study on his two English/German daughters. Other important studies are: Taeschner (1983) on her German/Italian girls, Fantini (1985), reports on his Spanish/English son and daughter, and Saunders (1988) who has three English/German children. There are also parenting books for bilingual families, which include examples of the author’s children, such as Una Cunningham-Andersson (1999) with four English/Swedish siblings, Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa (2001), a trio of trilingual siblings, and Stephen Calder’s (2006) French/English girl twins and a son.

Parents around the world wonder how they can facilitate the best language environment within their particular family combination. From informal website discussion groups, blogs about multilingual families, organized seminars or parents chatting together about their kids over coffee, here are a selection of questions parents ask regarding siblings and bilingualism.

**What do we do when one child refuses to speak one language, while the other one speaks it perfectly?**

This problem is can be due to siblings unconsciously competing, especially when they are the same gender or close in age. If one cannot be as good as his older sibling he may decide do the opposite. Parents need to remember that not all siblings have the same linguistic abilities, like musical and artistic skills. Sometimes a child may feel more culturally attached to one language and country, and over time the other language can become passive or under-used. The child feels he can never catch up in one language, and decide to ‘drop’ one language. Parents need to find out why the child won’t speak the language and try to support and encourage the child.

**How do we react when we see one child mixing up the languages and the other carefully using only one language at a time?**

Mixing at an early age is simply part of the child’s development, whilst later mixing is a sophisticated feature often done between bilinguals. Children have different personalities and
ways of doing things and we can fight against these differences or accept them. Parents may have been strict with the first child on using the right language, then unconsciously allowed later children to use the ‘wrong’ language with them, or replied in the other language to the child. Therefore some children will separate each language, while others will add in a phrase or word from the other language. Parents should not worry as long as the child uses the right language with the right person.

**How can two children living in the same home and having the same language input end up so different linguistically?**

Even twins with the same genes turn out differently. Siblings living together and having the same input are nevertheless affected by the way they learn, the opportunities they are given to practice language and the feedback they receive when they speak each language. As more children arrive we have less time for each child and some things must be shared, but we can still involve siblings in language learning. A second child arrives in a family with an established strategy, which is a positive factor, however we must be careful to provide enough support for a weaker language and not let the school or environment language take over.

**Do our family strategies change as the family grows?**

Yes, a strategy chosen when we have a baby or young child may not be applicable with a school age or adolescent child. Following rather strict and rigid strategies like OPOL or Minority-Language-at-Home might backfire when older children understand that their parents understand each other’s language or prefer to speak the language of the school or community at home. Parents need to adapt, perhaps moving to a more mixed language strategy or time-or-place.

**Will the age gap of our children matter in language use?**

Close in age siblings tend to share more things and have a similar lifestyle and attend school together. They will use language together in their games and everyday communication. Children with a gap of six or more years have more separate lives, but are the older one is more likely to read or talk to a younger child and show an example of how we use languages.

**Can an older sibling help teach a language to a younger sibling?**

Big sisters seem to love ‘teaching’ their younger siblings and this natural interest can be beneficial in supporting a weaker or minority language. Children may share their love of songs, movies, and books with a new baby. However we should not leave the teaching to the siblings, because children need a whole range of language models.

**Does the birth order affect bilingualism in the family?**

Psychologists are wary giving much credence to being the first/middle or last-born these days. What they do agree on is that first-borns tend to dominate their siblings, while middle ones look for a different way to please their parents and last-borns may stay ‘baby’ as long as they can and use their status to get attention. Judith Harris, author of *No Two Alike*, notes that sibling dominance is particularly strong within the home, but the genetic differences and the
As a parent of three children who have been brought up bilingually with English and French I have seen dramatically differing results. Our first child, Marc, now 10, clearly separates each language and identity, while our middle child, Nina, 8, is very articulate and mixes both languages with great skill and wit, and the baby of the family, Gabriel, 4, makes the rules for himself.

We had begun, like many families, with a clear decision to follow the one parent-one language strategy, or OPOL. I only spoke English strictly with Marc, even when in France or with French friends. Nina arrived when Marc was two years and three months old and still not speaking more than two or three-word sentences. But by the time he was three he was becoming bilingual and a move to France for a year coincided with Nina’s first words, in both French and English, and Marc testing out his French. The children began to speak English together and switched to French when they needed to. When we moved to England on Nina’s second birthday her French faded away and English took over. Nina was a chatty and articulate girl at preschool, but her French was ‘baby talk’ and she preferred to not to talk rather than sound babyish. French only kicked in when she had to speak it at school, and then to our amusement she developed a French-accented English.

Gabriel arrived in a household where two siblings had established their bilingualism and the family strategy was more ‘mixed,’ since Marc and Nina knew that their parents understood both languages and they could choose and mix languages. We had become more relaxed and allowed Marc and Nina to mix English or French, and we would reply in either language. We were confident that they would use the right language, which they did. In France I spoke French with the children in front of my French family and friends. Why the change? We thought that bilingualism was a given. Two out of three had worked well, even with a few teething problems. We had managed to convince the in-laws, the teachers and the doctors. So we rested on our laurels and watched Marc and Nina teach Gabriel. Four years later we had a tricky problem with Gabriel, who answered back Jacques’ French with English (often forcing Jacques to speak English) or manipulating ‘non-English’ speakers to use English, and when he did utter a French word it was with an English accent.

Are our family language patterns affected by birth-order, gender or sibling rivalry and competition? How could three children with the same parental language input and environment be so different? These are questions not often answered in the literature on bilingualism.
way we treat each child differently are more important than their family position.

**How does the number of children affect bilingualism in the family?**

One child will hear more adult conversation, leading to a broader vocabulary and a more sophisticated grammar. He will be able to ask more questions and have more one-to-one time with the parents. Two siblings are going to have less adult-talk, but benefit from child-to-child-talk. They will learn how to accommodate, argue and probably learn a few slang words in each language as well!

**What about sibling rivalry?**

Siblings are known to correct, laugh at the other’s linguistic mistakes or put down a sister or brother who is trying to say something. This is an issue we need to keep an eye on, making sure one sibling is not upsetting another, and allow children to make mistakes without being laughed at.

**What language will the children speak together?**

Children tend to choose the language of the community or the school together, so the language can change as they enter school or move to another country. Many siblings enjoy mixing together and since they understand both languages this is a linguistic game they can play. Siblings may revert to their minority language in public, so as to have a private conversation. Parents cannot really control their children’s language choice, it is up to them and we should respect their choice.

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**FURTHER READING FOR BILINGUAL FAMILIES: SIBLINGS**


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*S For more stories about the children’s bilingualism see Suzanne’s blog ‘Notes From the OPOL Family’ [opol-family.blogspot.com](http://opol-family.blogspot.com) and her quarterly column in Multilingual Matter’s The Bilingual Family Newsletter.*
Every Wednesday afternoon I take my trilingual three-year old son to a neighbourhood Parisian park, and, to my delight, French isn’t the only language used in the sandbox: I have been noticing more and more kids who speak at least two languages. In my son’s day-care, for instance, three other kids are bilingual.

When he was born, we considered carefully how to manage his multilingual development: having to juggle four languages daily is a challenging task. The Parisian pediatricians were surprisingly uninformed. We visited several and asked specific questions on the issue (one was a published luminary as well): they all pretty much discouraged us, frightened us with visions of a child overwhelmed by the multiple linguistic codes of his environment, and advised us to stick to two languages at the most, if we really had to.

We really had to: luckily our motivation was stronger than their nonchalant, superficial approach and, after having gathered information from experts in Switzerland, Belgium and Canada, we found a comfortable method (OPOL) and stuck to it. Three years later, our son is trilingual in Italian, French and Dutch, against all odds! However, along the journey I have met more than one foreign mum who felt intimidated by the strength and weight of the French culture and gave up on her multilingual project. Susanne, a Swedish mum married to a Frenchman, stopped speaking Swedish to her son Sebastian when he entered kindergarten because she feared his French would not be good enough when entering school. Another Egyptian mum married to an Anglo-Italian has chosen to speak just French at home to simplify her kids’ life. These individuals certainly have the rights to their own personal choices, but had they been properly informed and supported at the right moment by the professionals, perhaps they would have chosen to enrich their kids’ life with the invaluable gift of raising them multilingually.

Barbara Abdelilah-Bauer, a German linguist, psychologist and author of a book on the challenges met by bilingual kids, has discovered this increasing crowd of multilingual parents, bi-national couples, and expatriates. About a year ago she created the ‘Café Bilingue,’ a series of periodical meetings held in Paris, allowing parents to exchange information and occasionally ask questions to experts.

The last meeting dealt with the topic of bilingual education in France, outlining the differences between foreign language teaching in private and public systems. Marlene Dolitsky illustrated the difference between the assimilation of multiple languages within a natural environment (a multilingual family, for instance) and learning a living language within primary schools. The comparison enhanced the staleness of the French

1 “Le défi des enfants bilingues: Grandir et vivre en parlant plusieurs langues,” 2006, éditions La Découverte

2 Co-author of “Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Primary School”
The Bilingual Café provides the opportunity to experience a multicultural atmosphere that lends itself to the use of all languages and is open to people from different backgrounds. Though French will be the principal language of communication of the BILINGUAL CAFÉ, speakers of all languages are welcome. The success of each meeting is measured by the diversity of its participants.

Launched in April 2006, the BILINGUAL CAFÉ has quickly found its place among multilingual families of the Paris area; the meeting of June brought together more than 40 people (parents, friends, grand parents, without counting children) of different languages and cultures.

Next Grand CAFE BILINGUE meeting (in French): Saturday 12 May 2007

Information: www.famillesbilingues.com

You’d think that French ruled here; yet consider this: 7% of French private companies with international constituencies and interests have elected English as their official language. Anglicisms are spreading in everyday life (thanks primarily to the intrinsic difficulty of controlling the net) and are widely heard on TV (although pronounced with a strong French accent!). French youngsters love to label something as cool, or someone as speed (meaning stressed); they read la presse pipôle (which stands for ‘people,’ that is celebrity press, after People magazine in the US), they watch prime time on TV, they try to boost their career, and they hire a baby-sittér on Saturday nights, and they do interviews with start-ups, just to name a few examples...

France has been consistently putting tremendous effort into protecting its national language, while remaining oblivious to the fact that a significant percentage of its population nurtures a multicultural richness. Multilingualism is obviously and consequentially on the rise, but unfortunately still viewed as a (de)fault: when will it be recognized as an asset? 💝

Claudia is an Italian native who landed in the US at the age of 19 to pursue undergraduate and graduate education, and eventually returned to Europe after a decade. She is the mum of a truly European kid who’s growing up quadilingual, and is currently enjoying being a “foreigner” again in jolly France! Learn more at her blog: multilingualkids.blogspot.com/

In our next issue: 
Read Claudia’s interview with Barbara Abdelilah-Bauer, founder of the Café Bilingue in Paris!

European and 12% are Asian). In Paris alone, out of the 2 125 851 inhabitants, 308 266 are foreigners. 10% of marriages contracted every year in France are between French nationals with foreigners.

3  Author of “L’enseignement en classe bilingue” (Broché) 2005, éditions Hachette
4  (45% are African or North African, 40% are...
The European Union is based on the principle of “unity in diversity,” which refers not only to culture, customs and beliefs but also to languages. This includes official languages as well as a wide variety of regional and minority languages. Article 22 of Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, adopted in 2000, stipulates this respect for linguistic diversity and September 26 has been declared the EU’s day of languages.

Multilingualism is high on the EU agenda for 2007. The European commission is dedicated to preserving and promoting Multilingualism with its positive contribution to economic competitiveness and growth, intercultural dialogue and lifelong learning, as well as political dialogue. The commission plans to launch a series of new studies on linguistic diversity later on this year and to convene a ministerial conference with the aim of working towards a new framework strategy for Multilingualism.

Did you know...

- The EU has 27 member states, 23 languages official languages and three alphabets (Cyrillic, Latin, Greek).
- At the start of the EU in 1957 - exactly 50 years ago - there were only 4 languages: German, French, Italian, and Dutch.
- As the Union expands, each joining member state stipulates which language it wants to be declared as its official language of the EU.
- In 2007 three languages are added, with Romania and Bulgaria joining the Union; as well as Irish Gaelic.
- If Croatia joins the Union in 2009-2010, the number of official languages will rise to 24.
- What this means for all EU citizens is that they are able to access information and documents in their own languages; parliament is conducted in all 23 languages, and translation and interpretation services boom as never before.
Want them to be good at school?
Raise them in two languages!

Using two or more languages deepens understanding of mathematical concepts and results in a better overall performance in school, concludes a research team from Goldsmiths, University of London, UK. Bilingual children are able to access key concepts through both languages, giving them an advantage over monolinguals. Researchers say this find is of particular importance for second and third generation immigrant children. Common advice in the 60s and 70s encouraged an English-only policy at home and at school for better performance; however newest research proves the contrary to be true. It is very important that immigrant parents keep talking to their children in their mother tongues as this will give children a valuable tool to access lessons, deepen understanding of key ideas, and enhance overall school performance.

news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/6447427.stm

The biology of language switching

There’s an area in our brains called the “left caudate” that allows us to switch between languages, researchers from the University College London, UK, discovered. Previous brain-scan research suggested an overlapping of neural circuits for different languages, failing to identify a specific region that could be responsible. Recent research that combines brain scan with behavioral tests suggests that the left caudate increases its activation when languages are switched.

www.newscientist.com/article/dn9304-how-bilingual-brains-switch-between-tongues.html

The Serious Side of Multilingualism

Serious money that is!

Livia Dewaele, a 10 year-old trilingual, learned first hand the monetary rewards of multilingualism recently when she was hired by a company to make a Dutch-Flemish voice-over of an ad for Cisco. Livia’s father, Jean-Marc Dewaele, a multilingual linguist, was delighted that his daughter had the chance to utilize her multilingualism in such a direct way. Situations like these, he pointed out, remind us that not only is multilingualism fun and fabulous, it is also a skill and an asset valued by businesses, governments and educational establishments around the world!

For more on Cisco’s Human Network campaign: www.cisco.com/humannetwork
It never occurred to me that I would marry a non-Indonesian. In 1998 I won a scholarship to get my Master’s degree in Law in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The law firm I worked with in Jakarta at that time gave me permission for a study leave. I was thinking it would be as simple as that: to go to Amsterdam, study hard to get my degree and return to the same office in Jakarta. Somehow, the plan did not go as expected.

I actually grew up in the Netherlands as I spent 3 years of my childhood in Wassenaar and went to local preschool, kindergarten and basic school. Returning to the Netherlands as a university student really made me very happy. I felt I was familiar with everything - the canals, bikes, raw herring, the language – I kept it all at the back of my head, and living in Amsterdam somehow pulled all those memories out again.

Unfortunately, my Dutch language was not well maintained after our family left the Netherlands for another country when I was 7 years old. So there I was, returning to the Netherlands, feeling home in Amsterdam without being able to speak Dutch properly. That's why I went to a Dutch course at my university. On the very first day I met my future husband, a Frenchman called Nicolas, who was taking his PhD degree in Physics. We immediately felt connected. Before my return to Jakarta, we decided to get engaged.

We were apart for exactly 1 year until our wedding day. During that year, I had to explain slowly to my parents that I had met a non-Indonesian and planned to marry him. My parents did not really like the idea of me marrying a foreigner, especially since it meant that we would have to live abroad afterwards. However, seeing how serious I was in this relationship from the constant international calls, sending emails to each other, and preparation of the legal papers for the marriage, my parents finally gave their permission.

Nicolas came 3 times to Jakarta, so during the year we were far from each other. The first time he came to introduce himself, the second time he came with his parents to officially propose to me, and the third time for the wedding. It was a tough year for me because all this marriage preparation involved tons of work. On top of that, I was still working more than 12 hours/day at a law firm. There was tremendous paperwork involved, as well as lots of phone calls and visits to embassies and local authorities because our marriage was between a French and Indonesian national who would live in the Netherlands. Plus, I also had to apply for my Dutch visa, which meant even more paperwork and more going back and forth. It took us 3 months to put all papers in order. Indonesian weddings are complicated. Our wedding was very simple, but it still needed a lot of attention. Choosing and booking the wedding hall, finding a beautician, choosing the outfits, the committee, catering service, preparing invitation letters... all this caused a lot of tension for everybody. Our big day was October 21, 2000. The wedding went well, all the tension disappeared. We went to the city of Jogjakarta for our honeymoon. 2 weeks later we returned to Amsterdam. It was a tough year... but we made it! Hooray! People often ask whether it is difficult for us to get along with each other with French and Indonesian being totally different cultures. Our answer is always ‘no’. Everything has been smooth between us from the beginning. Probably because we always communicate everything; or probably we are just made for each other. Plus, lately I thought probably the fact that both of us are adult Third Culture Kids and that both our parents are diplomats contributes to such easy-going manner between us. Both of us grew up in three different countries. Probably we’ve been using our third cultures between us, so there has been no strong Indonesian or French culture in our household. During our first 3 years of marriage without any child, we got to know each other very deeply. Despite the common belief that it’s harder to maintain an intercultural marriage, we have been very happy and content. ❖
Korean Temple Painting

Dancheong, meaning “red and blue,” is a traditional Korean pattern used to decorate palaces and temples, ancestral shrines and ancient city gates. It arrived with Buddhism from China in the 4th century, and eventually developed into an intricate craft. The five basic colors that are used - red, blue, yellow, black and white - symbolize the 5 elements. The paint also has a practical significance as it preserves the wood from insects, decay and damage from inclement weather.
Mini Lesson #3: Basic Grammar

The best part about Esperanto is that there are no exceptions to the rules! Get ready for Lesson #3 where you will get your first taste of grammar!

In today’s mini-lesson, we will have a first look at some basic grammar. One of the nice things of this language is that there are no exceptions to the rules. For starters, let’s consider these rules:

1. The infinitive form of the verbs always ends in -i. Here are some examples:
   - to sing: kanti
   - to hold: teni
   - to run: kuri
   - to cook: kuiri

   The past, present and future tense is formed by replacing the -i with an -is, -as or -os, respectively. The sentence “I ran” (past tense) translates into: “Mi kuris,” and “I run” (present) is “Mi kuras.” “I will run” (future) translates into “Mi kuros.” This rule can be applied to all verbs, **irregular verbs do not exist in Esperanto.**

2. To make meaningful sentences we also need a subject, a noun. **All nouns end in -o:**
   - the school: la lernejo
   - the street: la strato
   - the house: la domo
   - the cake: la kuko

   **Plurals are formed by adding a -j to the noun:** lerneoj, stratoj, domoj for schools, streets and houses.

3. The article “la” is always used when you want to talk about a particular noun. If you talk about a particular cake, as in “the cake is on the table“ then you use the article la in front of the word: “La kuko estas sur la tablo.” If you talk about an undefined cake (“A cake is on the table.”), then you just omit the article: “Kuko estas sur la tablo”. How would the sentence “A cake is on a table” translate? And I think that I do not have to tell you the meaning of the preposition “sur”?

**Exercises - Try to form the following sentences:**

a. A cat walks on the street. (cat: kato; to walk: iri)

b. The cook cooked in the kitchen (to cook: kuiri; kitchen: kuirejo; cook: kuiristo; in: en)

c. The teacher will talk to the students. (to talk: paroli; teacher: instruisto; student: lernanto; to: al)

d. I want to dance and sing. (I: mi; to dance: danci; to sing: kanti; to want: voli; and: kaj).

e. The cat jumped through the window and ran to the man. (to jump: slati; window: fenestro; man: viro; through: tra; check previous sentences for other words!)

**Answers**

CLICK HERE to jump to page 76 to find the answers to the Esperanto exercises!
Going Dual?

With Spring here, we would like to introduce you to “Floppy”, a lovable rabbit who learns that it’s OK to look “different” and helps his friends to accept diversity too.

Multilingual Living readers are eligible for a 10% discount on the following three books in the Floppy series.

To receive the discount, simply apply Coupon Code CCS-FLO upon order checkout - discount expires May 31, 2007.

To access lesson plans and activities that use two of the Floppy books, visit www.languagelizard.com/images/Appreciating_Cultural_Differences.pdf

Floppy
Written and illustrated by Guido Van Genechten

Rabbits’ ears come in all shapes and sizes. But they are all straight and long. All except Floppy’s. Floppy tries different ways to make his floppy ear straight… hiding it in a tea cosy and even tying a balloon to it! In the end, Floppy discovers that friends love you for who you are and not for your ears. This is a humorous book to help children build self-esteem. “A pleasing book to add to early years shelves,” says the UK’s leading independent children’s review magazine, Books for Keeps.


Floppy’s Friends
Written and illustrated by Guido Van Genechten

Floppy’s friends only play their special games with their special friends. They never want to play with the other rabbits. When a new rabbit Samy arrives, he doesn’t know their games. What’s more, Samy doesn’t look like any of the other rabbits and the other bunnies make fun of him. Floppy befriends Samy and they teach each other really cool games. Floppy then steps forward and helps all the rabbits come together. Children will relate to the difficulty of being the new child and trying to make friends. This is also a good book for discussing friendship, accepting differences and getting along with others.


Floppy in the Dark
Written and illustrated by Guido Van Genechten

The summer’s so hot that the sweet carrot ices melt before your first lick. There’s no better time to sleep in a tent. Floppy has his secret supply of carrots and even his hero’s cape. But what’s that noise? This enchanting story deals with the fear of the dark that every child knows, with warmth and humor. All the Floppy stories are illustrated by award winning artist Guido Van Genechten.

My name is Livia Teresa Dewaele. I am good at football and netball. I have a red belt (4th Kyu) in Go Kan Ryu karate. I think I’m bright (maybe not) and would like to get into one of the very good grammar schools, Latymer in North London. I am 10 years and 4 months old. At this present moment in time, I live in London, England with my mother and father. In the same house, the same road, the same country as I have always done. I have been all around the world, only not Oceana, Africa or Asia. I am a good cook who will and can cook anything. Also, I’m very busy with clubs after school. My favorite club is Drama Club (Helen O’Grady Academy), which I have been doing for almost five years. I am very good at that too.
My parents come from Belgium. My mum speaks Dutch with me, my dad speaks French with me but at school I always speak English. So I speak English, Dutch and French. The language I enjoy speaking most is English. This is because I speak English everywhere apart from with my family. I understand everything my family says, however sometimes I can’t find the right words to use if I want to say something or answer a question. I think this is because almost everything I hear around me is English and I don’t hear much French or Dutch. As well as that, I learn everything in English as I am at a school in London.

My friends are amazed that I speak so many languages, they are a bit jealous too. When they hear my dad speak to me in French they are like “is that French? Oh!”; and “I wish my dad spoke French with me”; and “you’re so lucky, you speak three languages”. At my school 4 out of every 5 children come from another country, although they mostly only speak one or two languages. Their parents are almost always from another country, and rarely get used to speaking English.

My favorite subjects at school are literacy and history. My favorite thing in literacy is writing stories and poems. I like absolutely everything about history especially things to do with The Second World War so I went to The Cabinet War Rooms and the Churchill Museum (near Downing Street) where I learnt that for Churchill’s wedding he received seventeen inkstands. Did you know that Churchill’s butterfly collection was eaten by a rat in India?!

When I grow up I want to be a hotel inspector and at the same time write fiction books (the stuff my dad writes is not the most interesting of things). I would like to travel a lot, live in London and have a holiday home in the Alps and in Bruges.

Livia is the daughter of Jean-Marc Dewaele, Reader in French and Applied Linguistics at Birbeck College, University of London. You can read his insightful articles about raising a multilingual child as well as an interview he gave one of our columnists last year.

His article about Livia’s language development: [www.bbk.ac.uk/lachouette/chou31/Dewael31.pdf](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lachouette/chou31/Dewael31.pdf)

An interview with one of our columnists: [www.biculturalfamily.org/may06/int_jeanmarcdewaele.htm](http://www.biculturalfamily.org/may06/int_jeanmarcdewaele.htm)

His article about raising a multilingual child is included in the March/April 2007 issue of Multilingual Living Magazine: [www.biculturalfamily.org/backissues.htm](http://www.biculturalfamily.org/backissues.htm)
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Bangkok is a sprawling city of golden Wats (temples), intense traffic, bustling markets and welcoming people. Language classes offer travelers the perfect way to connect meaningfully with local people, and to gain insight into their culture. Pink Chili Languages opened in July of 2006 and offers private and small group classes in a relaxed environment. Classes are aimed at tourists, and teach practical information which can be used as soon as students leave the classroom. The school places an emphasis on teaching in Thai right from the start, and even beginning classes are taught in Thai to the greatest extent possible. The school tailors classes to fit the needs and schedules of each individual. In the following interview, Denise O’Leary discusses why she and Thai language teacher Prarinut Pusayaprichaphan (nicknamed “Apple”) founded the school and what makes their language and teaching philosophy distinct.
Driver: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself, how you came to be in Thailand and how the language school got started?

Denise: I’m Irish, and in Ireland we raise children for the export market, so when I graduated (as an engineer). I emigrated immediately along with 50% of my classmates. My plan was to live and work in lots of different countries for two years at a time. So I did two years in London, and then moved to the Netherlands…. where I stayed 15 years. I had good friends, a good job, a nice house etc. One morning at work I was a bit bored, so I looked at job advertisements on the internet (as one does) and saw one for teaching English in China. Then it hit me: if I wanted to, I could just pack up and go to China. In that moment the decision was made to move on. I ended up deciding on Thailand as it seemed like a nicer place to live than China. Three months later I had quit my job, sold my house, given away all my other possessions and was on a plane to Thailand (one-way ticket).

I learned some Thai in the Netherlands before moving, and continued after moving to Thailand. I bummed around for about 6 months, traveling and hanging out. Then I suggested to my Thai teacher, Apple, that we start a business together. She was game! We considered various options, before settling on a language school, as we are both interested in languages and teaching. I did a TEFL course so that I could teach English. Apple teaches Thai. We opened the school in July, and already hired a second Thai teacher (part-time). We hope to grow gradually over the next year or so.

Driver: Do you have a language philosophy? How do you think languages should be taught?

Denise: I’ve had many Thai teachers (moved around a lot), and with most of them, there was a tendency to talk ABOUT Thai IN English. Apple and I both strongly believe that this is a waste of time. You don’t learn to drive a car by talking about it, but by doing it. Thai grammar is very easy, so there is no need to spend hours going on and on about it in English. In fact, we don’t cover it explicitly at all. We try to get the student talking Thai as close to 100% of the time as we can manage. For the same reason, we only teach individuals or very small
groups, as otherwise the students get very little opportunity to talk in class, and we both believe that the lesson is then a waste of time.

We also believe that if you don’t use what you learn, you quickly forget it, so we only teach the kind of language that the student will use immediately, based on situations which will occur within a few days. The students then have a set of situations (e.g. ordering food, in a taxi) which they can handle in Thai. This list of situations grows as the lessons proceed. Finally, we both believe that a lesson should feel like an enjoyable social interaction as much as possible. Of course, you come to learn, but that doesn’t need to involve being lectured to as if you were 7 years old. Learning a language leads to lots of funny moments, and together with our students we enjoy a good laugh.

**Driver: What does your school offer for students?**

**Denise:** We offer very short courses for tourists and busy expats (5, 10 or 15 hours), which concentrate on spoken Thai in everyday situations. For those with time and inclination we offer longer courses (still based on practical situations), including reading and writing. Thai writing is a little complex at first, with lots of rules, so Apple and I collaborate on this: I explain the rules briefly in English and answer questions.

**Driver: What is the importance of studying a language while traveling?**

**Denise:** In my opinion learning even a little bit of the local language greatly enhances a visit to a foreign country. Even if you can only say hello and thank you, it tells the people you’re talking to that you’re willing to make an effort to communicate, and very often a conversation starts up, which may be in a weird mixture of languages! It becomes a game to understand each other, and it’s amazing how far you can get, especially when you include miming! By attempting to speak the local language, you let others know you’re up to this kind of contact. Even if you don’t get into a conversation, people treat you very differently when you at least make the attempt to speak their language.

*For more information on Pink Chilli Languages please visit their website at [www.pinkchilli.co.th](http://www.pinkchilli.co.th)*
Question: I met Mario when I spent a year studying in Brazil. Shortly after I returned to the US he joined me and took his engineering masters degree at a university here. We married and returned to Brazil where we intended to settle, but in 2 years neither of us could get a decent job even with his family connections. We had a baby and returned to the US where we have been for a year. My in-laws just left after a month long visit. They are very angry that we are back in the US, nothing seems to console them and this is causing conflict between my husband and I. Any suggestions?

Answer: The biggest reason people immigrate is for professional and economic opportunities and your experience seems to fall into that category. My guess is your husband’s parents are very upset that the professional opportunities in the US have lured their son away from Brazil and they are blaming you. Your husband’s part in the conflict may be he is also torn by his choice to stay in the US especially after spending time with his parents who are so unhappy. In his worst moments he may also blame you for introducing him to possibilities he had not considered before studying in the US. It would be helpful to talk to your husband about what he misses most about Brazil, what would make him feel better about his choices to stay in the US, how you two can bring more Brazil into your everyday lives. Making visiting Brazil a priority could also give the in-laws confidence you are not abandoning them or the language and culture. Sending DVDs of the baby to include them in his development and language skills will be a salve on their disappointment. Speaking Portuguese at home to ensure your child will be able to communicate with his Brazilian relatives will also help. Do try and stay out of any conversations with your in-laws where you are the one justifying why you live in the US. That is a job for your husband. They will become more accepting over time if he takes the lead in communicating your decision and rationale for living in the US.
Question: I am Swedish and my husband is from Canada and we live in the US. We have an 18-month-old daughter and I am speaking to her exclusively in Swedish. My husband has two children 10 and 12 who live with his ex-wife in Vancouver, BC. My step children visit 3-4 times a year during school holidays and we have gotten along well until recently. As my daughter has several words now, babbles to us and my stepchildren in Swedish, my stepchildren are resentful she isn’t speaking English. I think they feel left out because although my husband isn’t fluent in Swedish, he does understand and speak somewhat. How can I ease this conflict?

Answer: Blending families under any circumstances has many challenges and your situation with two languages where there used to be only one highlights the fact that you are a blended family. You have good intuition in coming to the conclusion your step children feel left out. There are a few things that might ease the conflict. The first strategy might be to increase the time your husband spends alone with his children when they visit. Time alone with the Dad who now has another family will let them know you are not threatened by his relationship with them and want them to have their special time together. Being gracious with your husband’s time can lower their anxiety about you and the Swedish language and culture. The next strategy can be to get your stepchildren more involved in things Swedish by using their bond with their baby sister. Food, games, music, movies with subtitles, a trip to Sweden if you can afford it will help your stepchildren feel included and more confident to experiment with Swedish in a playful manner. You can have them read Swedish toddler books to the baby. The baby will not care about their accents and will enjoy it. This will help cement your stepchildren into a relationship with their sister while she is little. You can let them know she will have English at preschool/school and be better at English as she gets older. Have confidence and keep up the good language work!
**Question:** I'm a non-native Spanish speaker, and I'd like to start teaching it to my 9 month old daughter. I've read dozens of books and research articles on bilingualism, so I know it's rare for a non-native speaker of a language to teach it in the home. Some of what I've read is encouraging, and other stuff essentially says “Don't even try it, because if you're not perfect, it'll be a bad experience.”

I'm holding back from trying because I don't know what expectations to set for myself, and her. I lived in Paraguay for two years, and have taken 18 Spanish credits when I was in college. So I speak “fluently,” but obviously cannot converse about auto mechanics or engineering in Spanish. I'd like to give it a try, but I want to make sure it is positive, and not stressful. If there is any hope for it working, then I'd love to know!!

I would really appreciate any advice or suggestions you have for me. I'd like to know how I would work out practical details, such as, since all our friends speak English, would I speak in English to her in the company of others, and relatives?

**Answer:** There are reports on successful using of non-native languages in the home, so if you decide to use Spanish to your girl, you're not alone and you can expect to raise a happily bilingual child. If anyone wants to criticise you about this choice using arguments like the one you mention, “you're not perfect”, ask them to give you examples of ‘perfect’ language users or, even better, a definition of ‘perfect’ language use. I, for one, don't know what that might be.

Don't worry either about auto mechanics and engineering. If your girl grows to find these topics relevant, then you and her will also find ways to talk about them, in Spanish or in any other language. Being multilingual means using different languages for different purposes, so you (or her!) don't need to be able to talk about all topics in all languages. If you did, one single all-purpose language would be enough. My children (three of them, all trilingual), now in their late teens and early twenties, still prefer to use one particular language to talk about the topics that they first associated with that language.

Keep in mind one thing: your girl has no idea that you are using a 'non-native language', or even a particular 'language' with her. You're being her parent, which is what she needs from you. Language use in a family is not so much a matter of teaching as a matter of feeling, in the sense of 'what feels natural', so this is your expectation for both her and yourself. If you feel that you are going to have to force yourself to use Spanish, if you find that you are fussing about what language to use to your child, that your brain tells you to use one language whereas your heart tells you to use some other language, then follow your heart. Perhaps your heart will tell you to use one language for everything except for when your child rushes to you in the playground wailing about a bleeding nose? Or to rock her to sleep?

It's also fine to use different languages to your child in this way. You know best what comes naturally to you to nurture your child. The only condition is that you should stick to your choice of languages, once you've made that choice. In languages, as in everything else, children need to know what the rules are, so they can learn to follow them.

Madalena Cruz-Ferreira is the author of Three is a crowd? Acquiring Portuguese in a trilingual environment, (2006) Clevedon, Multilingual Matters (www.multilingualmatters.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.
Did You Know?
“Multi-sensory information helps to form rich associations in learning. When more than one sense is used to process information, children benefit. Multisensory techniques are useful for teaching all children, and especially those with the visual-perceptual problems, fine motor problems, and the memory problems often associated with learning disabilities.”

Basic issues:
Human beings learn through different learning styles and each person has strengths in terms of which of the following learning style or combinations of learning styles work best:
- Visual learning through sight.
- Auditory learning through hearing.
- Tactile/Kinesthetic learning through touching and feeling.
- Gustatory learning through taste.
- Olfactory learning through smell.

Multi-sensory literacy activities:
1. Back writing. Trace letters and numbers on your child’s back as you say them.
2. Sand writing. Dust a cookie sheet with Cream of Wheat and guide your child’s hand to trace large letters and numbers as you say them.
3. Chalkboard writing. Guide your child’s hand as he writes with chalk or a wet sponge, saying each letter.
4. Finger painting. Use shaving cream or finger-paint on a smooth surface.
5. Skywriting. Trace letters in the air with large arm movements.
6. Three-dimensional words. Use pipe cleaners, dough, or clay to make letters, names, and words.
8. Three-dimensional markers. Make raised letters and numbers for your child to trace with her finger.
9. Magnetic letters. Place a letter you have shown your child in a bucket filled with unpopped popcorn and have your child say the letter and then find it.
10. Textured letters. Have your child feel the texture as you say the letter.
11. Key objects. Choose key objects or key pictures such as an apple, bottle or cat for each letter. Help the child match three-dimensional letters with the objects.
12. Cookie cutters. Use letter and number cookie cutters to bake cookies. Talk about the letters as you smell the fresh baked aroma and taste each cookie.
13. Alphabet macaroni. Find letters in vegetable soup or other food made with vegetable macaroni.

Books:
Phonics You Can Feel by Marilyn Kay and Andrea Colwell. The Reading Group, 1997.

Web Sites:
ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education ericec.org/minibibs/eb12.html

Information on this page reprinted with permission from the Urbana Free Library website: www.prairienet.org/buildingblocks/index.shtml.
While reading aloud from a Little Golden Book version of David and Goliath, the story of how one stone, in a small boy's hand, could bring down a giant, (one of several children's books, chosen by grandson Patrick for bedtime story reading) Patrick interrupted me to ask, “Grammy, was es means God?”

Over the phone, on Easter Sunday morning, after asking second-born grandson, Christoph, how he liked what the Easter Rabbit brought to his house, he answered, “Well, Grammy, I don't like the ones with slicen.” Even without knowing German, I was able to understand what Patrick was asking, but was not able to know exactly what Christoph was referring to, except that it was probably something inside one of the kinds of candy in his Easter Basket. As it turned out, even my 5th generation, native Californian, San Francisco Bay Area-born daughter, whose mother tongue is English, and who also speaks fluent German, didn't know what her son meant by “slicen.” I think my daughter told me she thought it was probably a Germanized form he created to describe layers or slices.

These are only two illustrations of many, relatively minor and endearing, ways my grandchildren's predominantly German-speaking household affects communication between us. The tones of their voices, their gestures and facial expressions, the look in their eyes, as they scrunch up their faces, while making efforts to help me know what they are trying to say, especially when trying to communicate more complex sentences to me, a single-language Grammy, can be, and usually are, delightful. It's sometimes like a game, sometimes a little like charades, sometimes giggle-making in the process of deciphering meanings.

Since they have plenty of storybooks in German and plenty in English, there is usually no problem when they bring me a book, and I say, “Sorry, I can't read that one. It’s
in German.” Only once, so far, have there been any signs of serious disappointment at the fact that I can’t read German, and that was when Patrick wanted me to read a beautifully illustrated issue of Bambi, and it turned out to be a German edition. So we looked at and talked about the pictures together, and the next time I came to visit I brought an English version of Bambi, which, though used, and missing a couple of pages, also was beautifully illustrated.

Something else we discovered, during our last visit, while I was writing down the words to stories made up and communicated to me verbally, by Patrick and Christoph, was that the scientific names of particular dinosaurs, because they are always in Latin, (I’ve had a few classes in Latin) are the same in English and German: Tyrannosaurus Rex is Tyrannosaurus Rex is Tyrannosaurus Rex, and the same with Brontosaurus, Rhamphorhynchus, Pteranodon, Triceratops, Diplodocus, Pterodactyl and all the other wondrously amazing creatures of Pre-Cretaceous life on this, our own third rock from the sun. Whether we looked their names up in a German book or in an English book, the names were spelled just the same in either language.

Fortunately, (because of time, which was also needed for the necessary completion of household chores and/or meal-preparation) Christoph’s spoken story didn’t require quite as much careful, pains-taking research as Patrick’s, and was about present-day, post-dinosaur-extinction-by-big-asteroid-rock, animals and events, such as human children, camels, reindeer and fire engines.

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.

A camel was going down the street. He just ran himself on the street, and he was all alone on the street. After the camel ran by, there was a boy and a girl. The girl said to the boy, “Wake up sleepy head.” Then a reindeer clopped on the door. Then somebody made the door open. Then a fire truck came down the street. A fire camel was on the fire engine. There was a fire station house forever. The End.
My eleven-month-old nephew pushed the toy car along the floor, crawling, grinning, looking back at me. “Oui, oui!” I encouraged. “Elle va vite, la voiture! Plus vite!” I didn’t know if Carl understood anything I was saying, but he kept playing with it, and I kept telling him to go faster. In fact, I’d spent most of the year speaking to him only in French, not knowing if any of it made sense to him—he lives in the US and everyone else speaks English to him.

As Carl scooted along, his socks came off his feet; as usual, he didn’t care. But since it was winter in Colorado, I did. By now, I was sitting on the couch ten feet away from him, and his socks were another ten feet away from both of us. “Carl! Tu as encore perdu tes chaussettes,” I chided him. “Va chercher tes chaussettes et apportes-les-moi,” I told him, not really expecting him to abandon the car to go get his boring old socks and bring them to his tatie who talks funny. But I knew it was important to immerse him in French, so I always did my best to narrate what was going on.

But this time he did. He stopped pushing the car, looked around till he saw the errant footwear, crawled over to them, picked them up, crawled to me, and sat docilely on my lap as I pulled them over his chilly tootsies. He had understood!

You see, I take care of Carl one day a week, speaking only French with him, all the time wondering if he understands my words as well as the fact that my language is different from everyone else’s, that different languages exist. But even from as young as four months old, he’s behaved in ways that suggest that he notices differences. For example, when I sneeze or make animal noises, he’d turn his head and stare at my mouth, reacting to the sounds that weren’t words. And when I answer...
the phone in English while babysitting, he’d look at me wide-eyed, quizzically. I really do think he can tell when the sound of the language changes.

By the time he was a year old, Carl was able to show comprehension of many words and expressions in English and quite a few in French via sign language, gestures, facial expressions, and sounds. There’s a French nursery rhyme about horses that I recite to him while bouncing him up and down on my knee. At the end of the rhyme, the horse goes from walking to trotting to galloping, and so I bounce him more quickly to match the horse’s pace. Carl knows that after the docile bouncing of “au pas, au pas” the faster movements will follow, so when I say “au pas” he often starts bouncing faster on his own, anticipating the trotting and galloping. I also like to count “un, deux, trois!” and then do something physical with him—spin around, turn him upside down, toss him gently into a beanbag chair to slide down. Now he’ll start smiling or giggling after the “deux,” knowing that something fun is about to happen.

The extent of Carl’s receptive vocabulary (what he understands but doesn’t say) is clearest, though, by how he responds to questions by pointing and moving. I didn’t realize this until recently, perhaps because I spent most of my time with him singing and narrating rather than asking him direct questions or giving him directions to follow. Now, though, I can ask him where body parts are, and he’ll touch them. In reply to “Où est le frigo?” he’ll toddle into the kitchen and touch the fridge. “Où est le hibou?” He’ll grab his stuffed owl. When we play hide-and-seek and I say “Où est Tatie Sarah?” he’ll find me and point and call out “Ta-tie!”

But the cutest of all was when I showed him how to give kisses. I’d been saying the French word “bisou” whenever I kissed him and making the smacking sound “mwah.” I’d have his stuffed animals kiss each other and kiss him, always saying “bisou” and then “mwah.” He caught on, and then I could tell him to “fais un bisou à Pooh” or “fais un bisou à Tatie” and he would! He even understands when I hand him the stuffed owl and suggest that the owl give the dragon a kiss.

A couple of days ago Carl and I were looking in a mirror; he reached out to touch his reflection. On impulse, I told him to “Fais un bisou à Carl”—give himself a kiss—an idea that I had never suggested before, requiring him to recognize that we were looking in a mirror and that Carl’s face in the mirror was his own and that he was supposed to kiss that face. Without any hesitation, he leaned forward and smooched his reflection and said “mah!” At that moment, I laughed and hugged him and gave him another bisou myself.

Sarah Dodson-Knight of Lafayette, Colorado keeps a blog, Bringing up Baby Bilingual, about her experiences teaching French to children: babybilingual.blogspot.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 Weihnachtsbäckerei". A nice CD to listen to in the car or at home!

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Emma is French and lives in France with her Russian husband and two children. “My husband and I both speak Russian to our daughters even though it isn’t my native language,” she says. “Sometimes I wonder if it is the right thing to do because I feel my Russian language skills aren’t always good enough. But my husband and I agree that it is our only way to keep Russian an integral part of our family. Sometimes I feel bad when I can’t remember a word in Russian, so I tell my kids that I am not sure what the word is and I say it in French. Later we ask their father what it is in Russian or we look it up together.” Emma is one of many parents around the world who has taken the plunge to raise children in a non-native language. As in her case, it most often stems from a strong desire to pass on a spouse’s (minority) language and culture to children, in order to ensure a continued connection with family abroad.

Some parents are taking this language plunge even though they and their spouses have no direct cultural connection to their non-native languages. Bruce, an American who lives in the US with his American wife and young daughter, says, “I studied Spanish in school and spent a year abroad in Ecuador. It just seemed like a waste not to share this language with my children. My wife doesn’t know much Spanish, but she is very supportive and enjoys learning the language along with our daughter. It is actually bringing us closer together as a family!”

Raising children in a non-native language can feel like a leap of faith at times - like cutting a path through uncharted territory with no map to guide us.
How should we go about it? Are we doing it well enough? Are our children even benefiting from what we are doing? Could we be holding our children back linguistically by doing this?

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers. The good news is that it IS possible and IS definitely worth it! The following tips can help to alleviate concerns that your children will end up the proverbial “scape-goats” of your attempts (which is the worry of every parent raising a child in a non-native language).

**Start by asking yourself what motivates you** to raise your child in a non-native language. Your motivations may not be what you think they are (read “The Life of a Non-Native” on the next page to learn more about this author’s motivations). There are no right and wrong answers here. This is about you understanding fully WHY you are doing what you are doing!

**Have a plan of action in place.** Have you and your spouse sat down together to discuss your reasons for raising your children in your non-native language? Is this your spouse’s language, or is it a language which your spouse does not understand? It is important for your nuclear family to be on the same page as you because YOU need all of the support and encouragement you can get!

**Find personal accounts** from other parents who are raising children in a non-native language (see sidebar on page 69 for some suggestions). These will help to boost your confidence. And read up on the benefits of raising children multilingually - another way to help solidify your confidence. However, remember that raising a child in a second language is no guarantee for later academic success, so if this is one of your motivations, make sure you understand the research (see [www.biculturalfamily.org/research.html](http://www.biculturalfamily.org/research.html) for a listing).

**It is important that we are honest** about our language skills, especially if we are the only one in our household who speaks our non-native language. Be realistic about your abilities to keep up with your children’s language needs and be painfully honest about your non-native language strengths and weaknesses.

**Get support for areas where you need it.** You don’t need to do this completely on your own! Join a language playgroup, find other parents who are raising their children in the same language, start your own parent support group or join an online forum for families raising bilingual and multilingual children. Take your children for a visit to a country where the language is spoken and let them be immersed in it.

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**Not all multilinguals are created equal!**

Are you raising your children in your non-native language in the hopes that they will be smarter, better in school, and more able to grasp complex concepts? If so, don’t assume this will happen by default. Although earlier research, which indicated that bilinguals lagged behind monolinguals, has been disproved, this does not mean we can assume that our bi- and multilingual children will benefit without an effort on our part! For our children to reap cognitive benefits from their additional language(s), it is important that we provide them with “linguistic-rich environments.” This means we need to expose our children to diverse language stimuli: singing songs together, reading out loud, listening to and speaking with native speakers, as well as the many other ideas you will come up with!

**Perfectly bilingual?**

As parents raising our children in our non-native language, we should remember that perfect or “balanced” bilingualism or multilingualism is not a likely outcome from any family’s efforts! As Colin Baker writes in *A Parents’ and Teachers’ Guide,* “This idea of balanced bilinguals, perfectly balanced in both their languages, is one muddled myth that surrounds bilingualism.” So, relax and enjoy!

**It’s not all about the accent...**

Many parents believe that they should not raise their children in a non-native language because they will pass on faulty pronunciation and/or incorrect grammar. This may happen. But what are the benefits of NOT raising them bilingually at all? It is worth the effort to continue what you are doing and in addition to find as much native-language exposure for your children as possible.
People often ask me how I can raise my children in German, a language I first learned as a young adult of 24 years. When I first met the German man who would become my husband at Mary Ryan’s Hostel in Galway, Ireland, I was distinctly disinterested in the German language and culture. At the time, my image of Germany was still tainted with discussions of the Second World War, the Holocaust and Hitler. Now, fourteen years later, it is difficult for me to separate that which is German within me from that which is American. The two are deeply intertwined, and together they define who I am. Therefore, I am surprised when someone asks me how I can raise my children in German. “Isn’t it obvious,” I wonder?

Through my dedication to the German language and culture, I have come to make them, to some degree, my own. As the fox in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s book, “The Little Prince” says, “It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important.” It is the time I have wasted for the German language, the time I have spent trying to understand and live within the German culture, the time I have devoted to my husband and his family that makes all of these elements and people so important to me. They are mine and have become a part of me because of the effort I have made.

Yet, there are times when I feel that my relationship to my second language and culture are very tenuous. For example, what would happen if my husband were to leave me? Would I continue to raise my children in German or would I rebel against the language and culture and refuse to continue passing them on to my children out of anger and hurt? Or what if my husband were to pass away while our children were still young? Would I become even more attached to my German connections? Would I go as far as to move to Germany to support the memory of my husband and to ensure our children continued his legacy? What does this say about my connections to my second language and culture? Are they really my own? Or do these belong to my husband and me together, as a kind of glue that keeps us connected on a private and personal level?

German also represents new beginnings for me; a starting over, the redefinition of identity and the opportunity to create myself anew. It is about seeing life through the eyes of an infant (not speaking a word of the language) and the gradual process of coming to adulthood (the ability to communicate in more complex conversations). The German language has given me permission to start over, in a way, and to be the person I felt myself to be as an adult. It does not carry with it any of my baggage of youth and has been mine to define and shape as I see fit. There is no one with whom I speak German that knew me as a child or has expectations based on who I was as a child.

But this love for German did not come about through a rejection of English and the American culture, as some seem to think! I have not made a choice of one over the other, pushing aside one so that the other could take its place. The English language and the American culture were there when I was born and they are not going anywhere; they have a very strong foothold. But they now occupy a place in my heart together with the German language and culture, like a parent who has two children. When I was pregnant with my second child I confessed to my obstetrician, Peggy Hutchinson, that I was concerned that I didn’t have enough love in my heart for more than one child. She said to me, “Corey, the special thing about the heart is that it simply expands when our new children are born and you will find you have more love in your heart than you thought possible!” She was certainly right! So too for my two languages and cultures. My being has simply expanded and they coexist in me together. They have different textures and are associated with different elements, different experiences and different events. They taste, smell and feel different. But neither is better or worse than the other. The only difference is the way in which they came to me: one in childhood, the other in adulthood. It is through their very nature of being unique yet intertwined in me that make up the whole of who I am.

Thus, when people ask me why I am raising my children in German, I spare them my long, contemplative explanation and instead I say, “Since we are living in the U.S., my husband and I know our children will get more than enough English language and American culture exposure, so we have decided to raise them in German. If we were living in Germany, we would raise them in English.” This seems to satisfy the majority of inquirers, even though deep down I know it is so much more!
Everything is on a continuum. What you do today will most likely change down the road - and this is to be expected. For example, as your children get older, you may start to use your native language more in order to discuss areas in which you feel limited by your non-native language. Let your children know this. Tell them that you’d like to discuss the inner workings of the dishwasher in Spanish (rather than Chinese) because you have more vocabulary about such things in Spanish. In fact, this shows your children that languages ARE fluid and that you are a bilingual/multilingual who uses different languages in different situations.

Providing a rich language environment is the key to raising a child in a non-native language. Make sure you read to your child every day. Sing songs, recite poems, and discuss topics in which your child is interested. Make sure to keep up with your child’s language level so that you are continually stimulating her interests and helping to build her vocabulary.

It is to be expected that your child will most likely correct YOUR grammar or pronunciation at some point, especially after spending time with native speakers. Don’t worry and try not to feel embarrassed! In fact, this indicates that your child is picking up the nuances of the language and is feeling a personal association (and boldness) with it.

Have fun! You are raising your child in a second language because it is a wonderfully inspiring thing to do! Cover your bases and then sit back and have a delightful time in what you are helping to establish! Don’t ignore the possible issues but don’t let them hold you back from giving it your all.

Raising children in a non-native language takes courage and commitment. It can also be one of the most rewarding experience of a lifetime. Your children may never thank you for the effort you are putting out right now, but the reward will come each time you hear them conversing comfortably with other speakers of your non-native language! Try to laugh a lot through this process. Highlight the successes along the way rather than dwelling on the setbacks.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Bilingual Parenting in a Foreign Language
Check out the listing of Frequently Asked Questions, resources, feedback from parents and much more. humanities.byu.edu/bilingual/

Bilingual Families Connect
Emily, the founder of this website is raising her children in her second language (Spanish)! Check out the resources and join the forum. www.bilingualfamiliesconnect.com

BUC by Non-Native Speakers
Bernd Klein and his wife Karola, both native Germans, are raising their children in German and English using the OPOL method. www.bklein.de/buc/buc_non_native.php

Bilingualisme (Non-Native French)
The founders of this website are raising their children in French even though both were raised as monolingual English speakers. Wonderful tips, suggestions, advice and personal experiences. bilingue.shearer.org

Bilingual Wiki
This site is growing quickly and has quite a bit of information. Check out the link titled, “Teaching Yourself and Your Child a Second Language” for tips and support in raising a child in a non-native language. www.bilingualwiki.com

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MILET DUAL LANGUAGE BOOKS

It is truly impossible to not enjoy Milet dual-language books! With their vibrant colors, delightful characters and appealing stories, our children were captivated from beginning to end, no matter which language we pulled from the pile.

The hands-down favorite was the dual language French-English flap book, “Qu’est-ce que c’est? What am I?” It is a long thin book. On the left page are three sets of questions in both languages (which rhyme) and on the right page are the three corresponding pictures to give hints. Open the picture flap and underneath are the answers in both languages. Great fun for the kids! They could hardly wait until we finished each question to answer it and move onto the next. An example of one of the questions (the picture on the right was of a shoe lace): “Mon lacet est toujours défait.” “Sometimes when you run, my lace comes undone.” And the answer: “La Chaussure” “A Shoe.”

In the “Chameleon Races” and “Elmer’s Colors” our kids had a wonderful time getting to know Chameleon and other reptiles with the fascinating eyes as well as Elmer the multicolored Elephant. And what is a bilingual household without flashcards and a mini picture dictionary?! What is special about Milet’s versions is that they add colorful pictures and delightful characters which made our kids ask to go over the words many times.

Milet’s “language learning” series is fabulous. Again, it is full of colorful pictures and fun drawings of boys and girls and doesn’t try to overwhelm the language learner. At the end of each section there is a fun, short quiz. A CD is also included where a native speaker reads out the elements from each chapter (to encourage children to answer back with what they have learned) and also goes through all of the vocabulary words one by one for pronunciation.

To learn more about Milet and their products, we encourage you to check out their website: www.milet.com.
BILINGUAL FUN - SPANISH

The wife and husband team behind Bilingual Fun have found a wonderful way to utilize their talents to produce fun, interactive and delightful DVDs for kids! It is like having their Spanish language classes in your own home!

Our kids watched each DVD from start to finish and later were singing parts of the songs which they had learned by heart! While the DVDs appear to be a little slow at first and are not purely in Spanish, they do their job in getting children to be motivated to learn new Spanish words and sentences. These DVDs won’t turn your children into instant Spanish speakers, but that is not the goal. And they won’t appeal to all children since it demands that your children stay still long enough to pay attention, but this would most likely be the case for any language class they might attend.

What the reviewers liked the most about the DVDs is that they included real children and parents engaging in what looked like real Spanish-speaking classes. They also made sure to include breaks where music was played and children were shown dancing and having fun. This kind of mixture is essential for keeping young kids interested and engaged.

We encourage you to learn more about Bilingual Fun at their website: www.bilingualfun.com.

PROFESSOR POCKET - SPANISH

Everyone loves Professor Pocket and her side-kick Desi, the dinosaur, at least in our household! From the first time we listened to this CD on in our car, our kids (ages 2, 3 and 5) have been asking constantly to listen to Professor pocket. After loaning the CD to our daycare provider (who is a native Spanish speaker from Nicaragua) she and the kids in her Spanish-English daycare are raving about Professor Pocket!

We were a little taken aback at first when Professor Pocket sang “No Hay Dinosaurios” with her clearly non-native Spanish accent. But we also figured that this might be an encouragement to non-native speakers to join in with her singing. The rest of the songs are sung by native speakers (you can listen to parts of the songs at their website). Spanish phrases, sentences and words are intermingled throughout the CD and have a way of sticking in your mind so that you find yourself repeating them later in the day. We enjoyed the story whereby Professor Pocket takes us and Desi to a farm, where we all share in some magical fun and adventures. Wonder why she is called Professor Pocket? Then you’ll have to get the CD and find out!

To learn more about Professor Pocket and Desi, go to their website: www.professorpocket.com.
Families around the world raising bilingual and multilingual children will sigh a breath of relief to find Colin Baker’s third edition of A Parents’ and Teachers’ Guide to Bilingualism. With its expert answers and easy-to-read format, this book will be a touchstone for families just getting started as well as those needing guidance along the way. As the world changes quickly, Colin Baker has taken the initiative to seek out and answer the most pressing questions and concerns of today’s bilingual families including questions on dyslexia, multiliteracies and autism with the same ease and expertise that we have come to expect from him. Corey Heller, Bilingual/Bicultural Family Network founder and publisher/editor of Multilingual Living Magazine

Written in a very reader-friendly style, the book is a practical introduction for parents and teachers to bilingualism. Straightforward and realistic answers are given to a comprehensive set of frequently asked questions about bilingualism and bilingual education. Areas covered include family, language, culture, identity, reading , writing, schooling  and issues.

Contents

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SECTION B: Language Development Questions
SECTION C: Questions about Problems
SECTION D: Reading and Writing Questions
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Glossary; Index

Author information

Colin Baker is Professor of Education at the University of Wales, Bangor and a Fellow of the British Psychological Society. He has three bilingual children and frequently gives talks to parents and teachers on bilingualism. He is the author of 14 books and over 50 articles on bilingualism and bilingual education, with specific interests in bilingual development and bilingual education. His books include Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism (4th edition 2006) which has been translated into Japanese, Spanish, Latvian, Greek and Mandarin. He is the Editor of the International Journal of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education.
Nasi Goreng:
the national dish
of Indonesia

200g cooked rice
salt
250g chicken breast
4 spring onions, chopped
2 pieces of garlic
¼ tsp terasi (shrimp paste)
100g cabbage
1 grated carrots
100g fresh soy sprouts
200g cooked and peeled prawn
4 Tsp coconut oil
3 Tsp kecap manis (sweet soy sauce)
2 TL sambal ulek (chili sauce)
1 egg

(shrimp paste, kecap manis and sambal ulek are usually available in Asian supermarkets)

**English Directions:**
Heat oil in wok, fry smashed garlic and finely chopped spring onions. Add the finely diced chicken breasts and shrimp. Add finely chopped cabbage, soy sprouts, and grated carrots. Add rice and fry for approx 5 min under constant stirring. Add spices, fry egg and add on top of rice when serving.

**Indonesian directions:**
The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality, by Alan Davies

Have you ever asked yourself whether it is possible to be a native speaker of more than one language? Who qualifies as a native speaker in the first place? How is a native speaker different from a non-native one? What is the role of identity in all this? In “The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality,” Alan Davies investigates the notion of the native speaker as a myth and a model, and provides answers to these, and more questions. A recommendable read for all bilinguals and those who wonder which of their languages is their “native” one - as well as for those speakers of a second language who seek entrance to the club of native speakers. Multilingual Matters: www.multilingual-matters.com, ISBN-13: 9781853596223, £13.56, $23.96.

Language Myths, ed. by Laurie Bauer & Peter Trudgill

Italian is beautiful, German is ugly, French is a logical language, and some languages are harder than others. And of course everyone knows that women talk too much and the media are ruining English! Everyone has heard them, not many of us question them: well-established, widely-held views on language that are often taken granted in our society. This highly interesting collection of essays, written by a team of world-renowned linguists, investigates each of these beliefs and debunks them as myths with false premises or as based on incomplete or misleading information. An informative and entertaining collection of linguistic misconceptions set aright! Penguin: www.penguin.com, ISBN 9780140260236, $14.00.

Life with Two Languages-An Introduction to Bilingualism, by Francois Grosjean

Some books are timeless... no matter how long they have been on the shelf, they still ring true. “Life with Two Languages” is one of these timeless books, originally published in 1982. For the family today raising children in more than one language, not only will the words of this renowned expert ring true, they will inspire and educate. Although research in the fields of bilingualism and multilingualism has advanced our understanding tremendously since this book first came out, the underlying questions, analysis and discussion are still extremely useful and inspiring for today’s families. Harvard University Press: www.hup.harvard.edu, ISBN-13: 9780674530928, $27.00, £17.95, €24.90.
Raising **bilingual** or **multilingual** children?

Tell **us** your favorite tips, suggestions, concerns, ideas or whatever else might be **on** your mind and you could **win** prizes!

Go to: [www.biculturalfamily.org/drawing.html](http://www.biculturalfamily.org/drawing.html) for more information!

**Enter to Win!**

In each issue of Multilingual Living Magazine, we will offer exciting prizes for our readers to win. **All you have to do** is to email us your tips, suggestions, questions, or anything else that might be on your mind about raising bilingual/multilingual/bicultural/multicultural children! **It is that easy!**

To send us what is on your mind, go to: [www.biculturalfamily.org/drawing.html](http://www.biculturalfamily.org/drawing.html)

**May-June Prizes:**

**Language Strategies for Bilingual Families**
by Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert and

**Siblings Without Rivalry**
by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish.
Multilingualism in action! Three scripts were used in Egypt during the reign of Ptolomy V: two Egyptian language scripts (hieroglyphic for important religious documents and demotic, the common script of Egypt at the time) and classical Greek. The Rosetta stone contains the text of Ptolomaic decrees in all three scripts, carefully inscribed for posterity in stone - a testament to humanity’s long legacy of multilingualism!

The Rosetta stone was created in 196 BC and was discovered by the French in 1799 at the harbor of Rosetta on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt, thus the name “Rosetta Stone.” It has been an extremely important find for ancient historians. The comparison of the three scripts has provided the key to understanding many previously undeciphered hieroglyphics and it has aided immensely in our understanding of ancient Egypt. The value of translation even with languages no longer “alive.”

The term biodiversity, in its most basic sense, refers to the variety and complexity of life on Earth. Although the term is usually associated with the ecological needs of the world (natural ecosystems, landscapes, species diversity) there is much to be said for the role that cultural biodiversity plays. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been exploring biological and cultural biodiversity from many angles. As they report on their website (www.unesco.org/mab/biodiv.shtml): “Natural systems cannot be understood, conserved and managed without the recognition and respect of the human cultures that shape them. Together, biological and cultural diversity hold the key to ensuring resilience in both ecological and social systems and understanding the links between nature and culture is crucial for its safeguard.”

Through UNESCO’s recognition of the symbiotic relationship between ecological and cultural biodiversity conservation, direct efforts are being made to bring the world together in order to understand them better. As Yasuyuki Aoshima, UNESCO-Beijing, China stated in his welcome address at the Tokyo Symposium on The Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes, “It has been said that there is only one Earth, but that there are many different worlds. Different worldviews do not only have significant political and socio-economic repercussions, they also determine the way in which people perceive and interact with nature, thus forming their specific culture. Natural ecosystems cannot be understood, conserved and managed without recognizing the human cultures that shape them, since biological and cultural diversities are mutually reinforcing and interdependent. Together, cultural diversity and biological diversity hold the key to ensuring resilience in both social and ecological systems.” (unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001478/147863e.pdf).

As multicultural families, we have a direct view on what it means to live in a culturally diverse world. To follow in the footsteps of UNESCO, we can use our unique roles to help protect the biodiversity of the world on many different levels.

**Slogan:** We use the word slogan in our every day lives as: “a memorable motto or phrase used in a political, commercial, religious, and other contexts as a repetitive expression of an idea or purpose.”

Do you know the roots of the word slogan? The word comes from the Gaelic sluagh-gairm which means “battle cry” and was used by the Scottish Highland or Irish clans. Sluagh means “army, host, slew” and gairm means “a cry.”

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slogan](en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slogan)

Photo screenshot of Mel Gibson from the movie “Braveheart”. Copyright: 20th Century Fox
The therapist then turns to comparing your child’s use of language with standard clinical norms. There are of course developmental norms for all aspects of language, including sound, grammar, pragmatics, but let’s say you are worried about the size of your child’s vocabulary (this is one of the commonest worries expressed by parents). The clinician’s norm says that children of the same age as your child have a vocabulary of x words, and your child is nowhere near that target. But the clinician also found out, through you, that your child has been steadily acquiring new words. So the problem here is one of rate of acquisition, and your child may be diagnosed with a developmental delay, which is a very common diagnosis. It means that he is developing later than his normed peers, age-wise, but there is otherwise nothing wrong with him. His acquisition of language follows a normal sequence, and he happens to be working up his linguistic competence more slowly than the norm. In other words, he has the vocabulary of a younger child simply because he has not learned a specific number of words yet, but he will catch up in time.

Most developmental delays sort themselves out on their own, and the therapist will accordingly tell you that the best ‘therapy’ here is just to go on as usual with your child: talk to him as usual, praise and tell off as usual, and come back only if you objectively notice that there is no development at all over a period of time -- not if your child doesn’t speak like your neighbour’s ‘precocious’ toddler, or like some child you heard about on the latest TV chat-show last night.

Let’s now say that the problem is not that your child uses language like a younger child does, but that both you and the clinician have trouble identifying him as a speaker of his language(s). He slurs, he hesitates, he uses non-words of the language(s), or he just refuses to use language at all. The issue here may well be a pathological delay instead. The therapist will know how to check for the causes of the problem, including by asking you other questions, and will know how to guide you in remediation, including by referring your child to a specialised therapist or a specialist doctor.

So far so good, but what exactly is being assessed in the case of multilingual children?

**MULTILINGUAL ASSESSMENT**

I mean the title of this heading in two senses, assessment of multilinguals and assessment which is multilingual. Let me explain. Language assessment instruments are not only normed on particular children, they are also normed on particular languages. In addition, therapists are trained in a particular language, which often coincides with the one language they also speak. Therapists may or may not speak more than one language, because knowledge of different languages is not part of their training. That this is so should begin to give you a glimpse into what multilingual assessment really involves.

Like other clinical professionals, speech-language therapists are trained on case studies. From their first face-to-face encounter with a real-life ‘case’, they will learn that they can provide adequate help to most clients, but also that some cases are beyond them, not because such cases are hopeless, but because they themselves do not have the necessary competence to deal with them. This is why a medical general practitioner refers clients to specialist doctors, and this is why monolingual therapists should refer their multilingual clients to multilingual colleagues, preferably multilingual in the same languages as the client.

A typical assessment session, say, the first session with your child, may include activities like asking her to answer questions, follow instructions, point at objects, describe pictures, ask questions about a picture, role-play, tell a favourite story, complete sentences, and so on, depending on the child’s age, the child’s linguistic proficiency and the nature of the problem that you and the therapist want to identify. But what if your child disliked the therapist at
first sight, or has never role-played in the language that the therapist is using, or, worse, what if the child doesn’t master the language that the therapist is using enough to understand all these complicated instructions? There are two issues here, besides the very crucial one of the personal ‘chemistry’ between your child and the therapist: one is the language itself of the interaction, the other is that children do not normally use language in this way. No one does. Normal use of language doesn’t match the artificial way in which therapists have to use it so as to elicit language samples from their clients. For this and similar reasons, you should be very wary of therapists who summarily assess your child as having a speech-language problem after one single session. Put yourself in your child’s shoes: Would you be your normal, natural self, including linguistically, if some complete stranger started giving you funny instructions and expected some response from you on the spot? Now imagine all this happening in a language that you are unsure of using for this purpose.

Many speech therapists are aware of these issues, and many, particularly those who are multilingual themselves, have learned to devise norms of their own that do justice to young multilinguals. Unfortunately, many again have no understanding that you can’t assess one language with instruments that have been normed for another. This is true of norms within the same language too: you can’t legitimately judge a Scottish accent as deviant, and suggest remediation therapy for it, if the only assessment instruments that you know about are normed for a Texan accent. By the same token, you can’t judge a child’s overall performance in Spanish as deficient, if the assessment instruments were devised for English. What I am saying is that even translations of instruments normed for one particular language are not good enough. One example will suffice to show what I mean: how do you assess a child’s proficiency in inflecting past tense verbal forms in Spanish with norms that hold for English, whose past tense verbal forms are the same for each verb?

Assessment instruments must be specifically normed for different languages and different language varieties (one case in point is the currently budding development of assessment instruments for Singapore English, which is a distinct variety of English).

Providing adequate multilingual support for their clients also means gathering knowledge about differential language uses. The reason is that no multilinguals use their languages in exactly the same way. If they did, they would have no need for several languages. Being multilingual means that you need different languages for different purposes, for example, to talk to different people that matter to you. The therapist will ask you precise questions about the languages that your child is exposed to, and in what way exposure takes place: who speaks what to whom, who speaks what to the child, when, where, about what, and so on. This questionnaire, which forms part of your child’s overall assessment, shows awareness of two things.

First, that therapists cannot assess a client only from observation at the clinic. They will need information about what is going on, language-wise, in the client’s everyday environment when no therapists are around, because clinical observation without information is useless: therapists must know what to look for. Any advice about future action should also take into account the child’s habitual linguistic environment: it won’t be very helpful, for example, to advise one parent to supervise pronunciation exercises in Korean, if that parent has no suitable mastery of the pronunciation of that language.

Secondly, the questionnaire shows awareness that only rarely does a client, especially a child, behave ‘normally’ (i.e. according to the client’s own norms) in front of a stranger in an unfamiliar setting. Establishing the child’s linguistic background in this way is crucial because
linguistic assessment makes no sense in a vacuum: it does not simply concern mastery of linguistic devices in the language itself, like its words or its grammar. It also concerns how the language is used in actual daily practice. Knowledge of this kind will avoid the therapist asking your child, for example, to give translations of different words in his different languages: if your child has learned words for, say, bedtime happenings in one language, which is the language that someone uses to him to talk about these things, why should he be expected to know the equivalent words in all his other languages?

It may also be the case that the child does know the word for, say, pillow, in different languages, but prefers not to say it in one of his languages: some words take a long time to master because the articulation of their sounds is very difficult for young children, and children hate to lose face by displaying their own linguistic shortcomings. Translation is besides a very sophisticated skill that has nothing to do with everyday language use. Multilingual children (or adults, for that matter!) do not usually go about translating languages into one another, unless they are professional interpreters. Talking about bedtime happenings takes place for the child in one language, and that’s it. If you want to find out whether the child knows words for these happenings, or how many he knows, or how many he understands, you ask him in that language.

The remaining issue is, of course, that available normed instruments are monolingual-based. That is, they are normed for single languages, and for monolingual users of those languages. This means that multilinguals continue to be diagnosed as ‘delayed’ because their production and understanding of one of their languages doesn’t match the norms for the same language among their monolingual peers. In other words, your multilingual child is being asked to behave like a monolingual, for purposes of linguistic assessment. This makes as much sense as attempting to reach relevant conclusions about the behaviour of siblings if all you’ve got to assess them by are norms devised for single children. Imagine the converse, asking a monolingual to behave like a multilingual!

The problem here is not your child, or her multilingualism. The problem is that implementation of appropriate instruments lags far behind our current knowledge about child multilingualism. Therapists who end up recommending peculiar things like you should stop, or start, using a particular language with your child, or like you should use one language only with your child, so as to ‘prevent language delay’, are not to blame either. They fall back on monolingual norms of language behaviour because they continue to be trained in them. And if professionals can’t help the indoctrination they have been subjected to, how can we expect lay people to know better? Well-meaning monolingual relatives and friends often do not help either. Any perceived deviations in children’s ways of expressing themselves are immediately attributed to their multilingualism too.

As said, my children were the first multilinguals in our extended family. Monolingually-raised grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends all found reason to comment on, and express concern about, the children’s use of their language. Words that “all other children know” were missing, expressions that they did use were funny and, interestingly, each side of the family was persuaded that the children could only speak their other language “properly”. In other words, they too assumed that people can only speak one language “properly”: if the children were found lacking in one language, this must be because their other, fully-fledged, language was preventing adequate development in it. One example? One of my children consistently used the word for ‘turtle’, in her languages, for ‘potty’. The reason was that we had a turtle-shaped potty for the children’s use at home. We lived away from both our extended families at the time (and potty shapes were not really the central topic when we called our relatives), so no one besides us, the parents, knew that this was a perfectly ‘normal’
word for what the child meant. Our relatives, however, unquestionably took the use of this idiosyncratic word as proof of language deficiency, because of the child’s multilingualism.

Let me end on a very positive note. What we know about multilingualism is that children exposed to more than one language (including signed languages) reach the same developmental milestones at the same time as their monolingual peers. We do therefore know that multilingualism cannot cause speech-language delay, because it doesn’t even correlate with delay.

(I know, I know, you must be asking yourself right now: “But what about all the research I’ve heard about, and read about, and been told about, that definitely says that multilingualism causes speech-language delays??” I should reassure you: I’m familiar with that research too. I’ve read both the original articles and the treatment that the media makes of their purported findings. Perhaps I’ll write about this in a coming issue of Multilingual Living Magazine? Let me just tell you, for now, that one constant feature of such studies, and of some current studies too, is the arbitrary assumption that multilingual language uses should be compared to monolingual language uses, the latter taken, as arbitrarily, as a norm for any language use.)

Keep in mind that those cases that come to our knowledge as problematic may not in fact be problematic, or may not be representative. Nobody reports a child, whether monolingual or multilingual, who’s behaving normally or above average. Rest assured that if your child does have a problem, that problem is not her multilingualism. Multilingualism is not an ailment that needs attention. It is, however, something that needs urgent recognition as a norm, because it is the natural condition of the majority of the world’s population. The current surge of multilingual children referrals to speech-language therapy has nothing to do with multilingualism, and all to do with the realisation, in a Western culture which has let itself be persuaded that monolingualism is the norm, that multilingualism does exist. The reasoning seems to be that since multilingualism does not match the familiar monolingual norm, it must be a deviance from that norm. Finding a difference in linguistic behaviour is equated with finding an anomaly. Hence, multilinguals need therapy. This belief is not, unfortunately, without serious consequences. Multilingual children who may indeed have speech-language problems often end up being ‘treated’ for their multilingualism, and not for their linguistic impairment.

Lastly, I should perhaps add one plea: please be reasonable before seeking therapy. A child takes many years to develop linguistic competence, whatever the number of languages involved. In several European countries, children are left to sort out their language development in peace up to the age of 7, or even later. And multilingual children all over the world where multilingualism is the norm develop just fine -- probably because nobody worries about their multilingualism. ♦

Madalena Cruz-Ferreira, a native of Portugal, is the author of Three is a crowd? Acquiring Portuguese in a trilingual environment, (2006) Clevedon, Multilingual Matters (www.multilingualmatters.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.

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SINGING AND DANCING

Language learning comes in some of the most enjoyable forms - for example, singing and dancing! Singing and dancing with our kids to help support our language? YES! Focus on songs in your second language but also try out songs in other languages! Some songs even come in multilingual versions, such as “Frère Jacque.” This also encourages children to enjoy and appreciate different languages and cultures. Choose songs that are easy to learn and easy to remember. Don’t bog down your children with having to learn lots of strange and complicated words unless they show sincere interest. And don’t forget about the dancing! Add movements to the songs for even more fun! Children enjoy moving when music is involved. Don’t know any songs that include specific movements in your languages? Go ahead and make some up! Find a children’s poem and add your own music and movements. Get your kids together and make up some songs together! Write them down so that you won’t forget them. You can use the tune from another song and add new words. The point is to have fun and get your children involved in having fun with their languages.
This week you can encourage your child to have fun learning numbers while measuring everything in sight! If possible, purchase a small measuring tape (you can often find them where sewing supplies are sold) for your child. Those made out of material are better than those out of metal. Or maybe your child likes the ones that fold together upon themselves? A ruler or other such measuring device will do as well. Whatever the shape or style, find one that your child enjoys using. Show your child what the numbers on the measuring tape mean and then show how to measure things.

Encourage your child to measure items in the house, outside, while grocery shopping, in the car, while taking a walk and more. Explain what the numbers represent and the lines in between. Talk about numbers and the relationship between longer/larger/short/smaller and what higher and lower numbers represent. Don’t overwhelm your child but also make sure to keep this activity stimulating by pointing out how many different things can be measured. Go ahead, let them try to measure odd-shaped items too!

If your child is older, then take this opportunity to discuss additional concepts such as how to calculate the area of an item, what an object’s “footprint” is and what depth means. The topics you can discuss are endless and with a measuring tape in hand, the fun will last for hours, days or even weeks. **Happy measuring!**
**Conferences**

**May 30-Jun 2 2007**
International Symposium on Bilingualism, Hamburg, Germany

**June 23, 2007**
Zurich, Switzerland
Raising Multilingual Children with Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa
[www.thestork.ch/knows/multilingual.php](http://www.thestork.ch/knows/multilingual.php)

**July 5-6, 2007**
Multilingualism, Citizenship and the Future of Minority Languages: Ideologies and Practices of Linguistic Difference in Europe
11th International Conference on Minority Languages (ICML 11)
Pécs, Hungary
[icml11.law.pte.hu/index.html](http://icml11.law.pte.hu/index.html)

**August 14-15, 2007**
Putrajaya, Malaysia
Plurilingualism and Multilingualism in a Globalised World
Malaysia International Conference on Foreign Languages (MICFL 2007)

**September 3-5, 2007**
Fifth International Conference on Third Language Acquisition and Multilingualism
University of Stirling, Scotland, UK
[www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/L3conference/](http://www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/L3conference/)

**Workshops**

**April 27-28, 2007**, (two day seminar): “How the Brain Works” (How the brain processes information, and Memory, Retention and Learning) and “Learning Objectives and Evaluation of the Medical Modules”. Sponsor: Universidad San Francisco de Quito. Location: Hostería San José, Pueumbo, Ecuador. Contact: Enrique Noboa, Dean of the Medicine Faculty or his assistant, Graciela Morales: [graciela@usfq.edu.ec](mailto:graciela@usfq.edu.ec)
WILL BE GIVEN IN SPANISH

**June 23, 2007**, 13:00-17:00
The New Stork Times is pleased to present a workshop with Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa “RAISING MULTILINGUAL CHILDREN”
How does a child’s brain develop to accommodate new languages? How does your choice of schooling affect your child’s successful bilingualism? What is the best method for developing multi-literacy skills?
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**Send us information!**

Are you giving a presentation, workshop or seminar on bi/multilingualism or bi/multiculturalism? Know about an upcoming conference or event which would be of interest? Send information to:

[editor@biculturalfamily.org](mailto:editor@biculturalfamily.org)
Bilingual Mangas, anyone?
“Manglish” makes learning English fun!

Mangas are vastly popular Japanese serial comic books that come in a wide variety of genres. They may involve sci-fi, fantasy and action, whereas other series focus on the business world or politics. There are mangas specifically for adults; yet there are also mangas for children, such as “Doraemon,” whose popularity has been growing beyond Japan. Mangas are originally published in Japanese, however there are also English translations thereof.

The Japanese newspaper Maichini Daily news publishes a bilingual manga called “Manglish.” To read the English, move your mouse pointer over any Japanese text. This is excellent for Japanese speakers wishing to learn English, or for English speakers to learn Japanese! Check it out here: msn.mainichi-msn.co.jp/entertainment/etc/manglish/

Challenges and Promises for Service Providers

“Our cultural and ethnic identities help to shape our beliefs and practices and who we are as individuals and as family members. These identities are not the script for our behavior, but they do provide a texture and richness. They can both bind us together in groups and separate us from one another. Knowledge and understanding, sensitivity, and respect for these cultural differences can significantly enhance the effectiveness of service providers in the helping professions.

Service providers are required to adjust and adapt strategies continuously to work effectively with families that may adhere to radically different and individualized values, beliefs, and practices. These challenges can be frustrating and can necessitate further study and information gathering. They also produce unparalleled opportunities to the service provider. They provide the practitioner opportunities to be exposed to a richness of human experiences, to learn new information, and to grow as an individual. Like the gardener, the application of individualized and appropriate interventions or strategies will result in a wonderful array of outcomes - children and their family members will be nurtured and supported to reach their full potential as individuals.”


Understanding Code-Mixing

...“bilingual children, like all children, learn the social norms that pervade their lives. Their acquisition and adherence to these norms are essential to their fitting in with their family, community, and cultural group. Community and family-specific norms shape bilingual children’s code-mixing behavior.

Looking at the social contexts in which the children have learned their two languages can give a better understanding of why individual children are using their languages in certain ways. Professionals and clinicians who are concerned about a child’s mixing should first seek to understand what Bilingual Code-Mixing means to the child in the context of her family, the neighborhood community in which she lives, and the cultural group(s) of which she is a member. Looking to these sources of influence is especially important in the case of professionals who are not members of the child’s community or cultural group and who are not themselves bilingual because the norms that are influencing the child are likely to be unfamiliar. Special effort is called for in such cases to ensure that the professional has a broader picture of the child’s mixing.”

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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