Bilingual DVDs, Television, Films...
Do they Help or Hinder?
Find out if experts agree with you!

12 Big Bad Myths & misconceptions

Multilingualism in Kindergarten?
DEFINITELY

RAISING A BILINGUAL CHILD
INTERVIEW

Immigration and language
SPANISH: An adopted mother tongue

A journey towards bilingualism (part 2)
Baked apples – YUM!
We offer a wide selection of popular German children books, CDs/DVDs/Software, toys, games & more products imported from Germany in our store and invite you to browse! Our quality merchandise has been carefully selected to encourage children of any age to read, learn, and/or play with German language products, especially in a bilingual environment. Most of our products are in stock for fast and economical shipping, including optional gift wrap service. We ship worldwide and accept major credit cards, Paypal, checks or money order.

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

www.abckinderladen.com
Fax 1-866-357-5953
In each issue we offer fun prizes for you to win! All you have to do is go to the link below and enter to win!

To enter the September-October 2008 contest, go to:

www.biculturalfamily.org/drawing.html

WIN a SIGNED copy of the must-have book:
Raising a Bilingual Child!

www.randomhouse.com

CONGRATULATIONS to our July-August 2008 WINNER:
Bee, Dalarna, Sweden

Go to:
www.biculturalfamily.org/drawing.html
for more information!
Features

18 Multilingualism in Kindergarten. Tales of a Parisian Experience, by Claudia Vaccarone

20 Interview with Barbara Zurer Pearson. Author of Raising a Bilingual Child, by Alice Lapuerta & Barbara Zurer Pearson

24 Twelve Common Myths and Misconceptions About Bilingual Children. Learn what an expert has to say, by Barbara Zurer Pearson

32 Parenting in an Adopted Mother Tongue. When a second language comes first, by Nadya Sustache

36 Do Media Help or Hinder Bilingualism? Readers and experts share their thoughts and wisdom

42 My Journey Towards Bilingualism, Part 2. The second part of a family’s language journey, by Yunisrina Qismullah Yusuf

46 Immigration and Language. How immigration and language intertwine, by Bettina Ribes-Gil

49 Book Review: Raising a Bilingual Child, by Alice Lapuerta
Departments & Columns

6 From the Editors’ Desks
From us to you and more

7 Web Tips of the Month
Multicultural Media

8 Mailbag
From you to us!

12 Multilingual Musings
Did you know…
Nü Shu - “Women’s Writing”
Indo-European - A temperate language?
Cherokee alphabet
Puertorriqueños
Oredr of the Itteers?
Anglo-Norman Language

14 In the News
Speaking Your Language!
Language Learning: like riding a bike
Using Language to Sell the Product
Mobile ASL
Ahhs & oohs Make All the difference
Bilingual Realization

30 Global Wisdom
Autumn
Papua New Guinea
Land of the Rising Sun

50 Language Activities
Refrigerator Talk
Missing Letter(s)
Supper-scramble
Parts of the Body
Crazy Sentences
Searching for the Words

54 Product Reviews
Kleine Grosse Welt (German)
Galloping Minds (Spanish & English)
Language Tree (Chinese, Spanish, French, Italian and Sign Language)

56 Final Words of Wisdom
Television Watching and Language
Internet and Bilingualism
Change is the hallmark of autumn. Leaves turn yellow, the weather turns cooler, we pack away our summer clothes and start to get out our sweaters and jackets. A new school year starts, a new semester at university. Possibly, a new job. In small or big ways, we all turn another leaf in our multicultural lives.

Change has also been a significant factor in both our - Corey’s and Alice’s - lives the last few months. In Alice’s household, a clingy toddler has turned into a confident kindergartener. And an intrepid kindergartner has turned into a curious and excited schoolchild. I, their mother, is going through a contradictory range of feeling, starting from tremendous pride to anxiety, from confidence to nostalgia. My babies are growing up now. There is no holding them back! I am packing away baby and toddler clothes, bibs, tiny shoes and milk bottles, and I am surprised at how hard it is. I want to hold on to them a little longer, just a little. But I realize: it is better to just let them go. For you can’t hold back change.

In Corey’s household, the changes have been rather rough the last few months. A health crisis in the family is something that none of us ever expect. Yet when it does hit, we are stunned. You just look at life differently when a close family member falls seriously ill. Priorities begin to shift. We re-examine our values and beliefs anew and it might be the beginning of an inner transformation as well. We cannot help but ask ourselves some existential questions: what roles do our relationships play now? Our values, jobs and activities? In the face of a serious family crisis, what role does Multilingual Living play? What do we do when life happens and multilingualism just doesn’t top the list anymore? Do we trudge along anyway? Do we give up? Do we change gears? It is clear that something needs to be changed. But what?

These are questions that all of us have to ask ourselves sooner or later. For us, the moment has come now. So, Corey and I got together (virtually) and tried to figure this out. Let me appease you right away in case you are getting concerned: We have decided to trudge along. But true to the spirit of things, a change needs to happen. It has to happen. It needs to be a kind of change that is compatible with the changes going on in our private lives. But it also needs to be a kind change that will propel Multilingual Living, both as a magazine and association, onto a new level.

Taking into account feedback from family, friends and readers, we plan on making the following changes in 2009:

• Starting in January 2009, Multilingual Living Magazine will be offered as a quarterly magazine. The magazine content will be more concise, more streamlined, more geared towards the reader’s needs. Help us by sending us your feedback in the upcoming drawing (www.biculturalfamily.org/drawing.html).

• We will have a new website, where it will be possible for subscribers to browse through articles via a search-function. Thus, in addition to a PDF, which subscribers receive on a quarterly basis, it will be possible for you to access HTML articles via the website. Hopefully, this will cover the needs of both PDF and HTML readers.

• For those hankering after a print-version, there is good news on the horizon! We are launching a new project which will aim at publishing The Best Of Multilingual Living Magazine by collecting articles from past issues. These will be like handbooks, each focusing on different topics. The project is still in its baby stages, however, and we will give you more information on this (with a possible call for help and submissions) sometime next year.

Corey and I are confident that these changes will not only improve the quality of our magazine, but also your overall reading experience! Please let us know what you think about these changes - we want to know! As always, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all of your support and wisdom!

Alice & Corey
Web Tips of the Month

MULTILINGUAL MEDIA

BILINGUAL BABES, EXPAT WOMEN AND BIG SKY DREAMS...

Omma and her husband are raising their children, Schmoo and Pan-Pan, to speak three languages: English, Twi and non-native French. This leaves a lot of room for misunderstandings and the strangest of conversations! Read all about it, along with their other multilingual misadventures, (especially the non-native aspect of French and the late start element of the Twi) plus profiles of other non-native bilingual children and resources for parents who would like to start!

Website: www.bilingualbabes.blogspot.com

The Big Sky Dream Project is a youth-led initiative that seeks to give a voice to immigrant youth by offering a safe place to share their life stories and dreams and to provide a place for youth advocates, educators and mentors to connect and share information that will help empower youth. Website: www.bigskydream.org

Expat Women is a site designed to help all women living overseas. Whether it is your first experience living abroad, you are a long-term expat woman, a repatriate, a researcher, a HR or Relocation Professional looking for expat resources or someone just dreaming of expat living, Expat Women has something for you! Website: www.expatwomen.com

Multilingual Living Magazine — September/October 2008
Keep up the excellent work on the magazine, I love it. I have now moved from Paris to French Guiana in South America. I am trying to find Anglophone community but need your help. I would like to start a playgroup here with any English speakers. Any age group is welcome and then we could separate the playgroups on different days to accommodate different age groups.

I am based in Cayenne. For the moment I need to gather names and then can organise the dates to meet up. I feel really isolated in terms of language. I am Australian but in France there were English playgroups, so hoping you could spread my message. If anyone is in the area they can contact me at: lyocnam@yahoo.fr.

Kind regards
Isabelle

“Les Enfants de Seattle” is a French immersion preschool, dedicated to immersing children ages 2 ½ to 4 ½ in the French language, culture & academic tradition. Creating a positive, enriching environment filled with choices and physical activities is our mission. Based on the principles of Montessori learning, our school is child centered. We teach about French culture by having children partake in the music, food and traditions of France. We welcome your interest and look forward to meeting your family.
asabarots@lesenfantsdeseattle.com
206-321-2107
Thanks,
Antoinette

At Pollyglot Tots we will be offering classes again starting in September in French, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese and Baby Sign. Our classes are immersion taught by native speakers. Our goal is to offer quality classes at reasonable prices. Children must be accompanied by an adult (we are not drop off). All classes are taught at the Phinney Neighborhood Center, www.phinneycenter.org. We will be listed on their website for the fall program which will be updated again end of August.
Website: www.pollyglottots.com
Thanks,
Tanya Knudsen

Bilingual Families Needed:

My interest in bilingualism is both personal and professional: I am a bilingual mom who is trying to raise a bilingual family as well as a doctoral student in the English Department at the University of Washington in Seattle. I am currently working on my doctoral research project and am seeking input from bilingual families about the advice they receive regarding raising their children bilingually.

I am especially interested in the following:
- the reasons a family decides to be bilingual/multilingual.
- the strategies used by parents and children to learn more than one language.
- the way children react to strategies or develop their own.
- the success and challenges a family experiences.
- the advice a family receives regarding their decision or their strategies.

The only requirement for participation is that you have made a decision at some point in time to raise your children so that they can speak more than one language.

There are several ways you could participate in this study:
1. You can fill out an on-line survey that takes 30-40 minutes.
2. If you live in the Seattle area, I’d like to invite to a group interview (60-80 minute) with other parents. Snacks and refreshments will be provided.
3. You can participate in an on-line group interview via Skype.

In addition, if you have kept a journal, blog or dairy entries about your family’s experience, you can choose to copy whatever selections you would like to share in the study.

If you are interested in participating in any way, please e-mail me at: hbasta@u.washington.edu for more information.

Thank You, Hidy Basta
“IndianTies.com: East Marries West” has launched!
The goal of IndianTies.com is to provide an online community for foreign spouses of Indians. IndianTies.com is a place to learn and share culture, find useful resources for intercultural Indian relationships. Find useful immigration info, explore India’s languages, figure out Bollywood, interact in forums, keep up with the latest news on the blog, and much more!

If you’re in a bi-cultural Indian relationship, IndianTies.com is the place to get connected! If you are a second or third generation Indian living outside of India, IndianTies.com is the place to get back to your roots!

We welcome new members to join the community!
Heather Chatterjee
info@indianties.com
www.indianties.com

Bablekid.blogspot.com...
On babelkid.blogspot.com my wife and I write about how we deal with the fact that our daughters have to grow up with 4 different languages to learn.

My wife is from Algeria and speaks French and Algerian (Arabic), while I’m from Germany. Between the two of us, we speak French, but with the kids, we stick to our mother tongues. The forth language is English as we’re living in the UK and our older daughter goes to preschool and some of our friends are English as well.

Chaotic and Interesting mix...
Cheers,
Jan

My husband and I run a language programs business in Boise, ID which includes a Spanish Immersion Preschool (full immersion), Spanish language after school programs, Spanish adult classes, family trips to Costa Rica (volunteer service and/or classes) and Mandarin Chinese classes for adults and children. We are in our fifth year of service. I raised my children (now adults) bilingually/biculturally (Spanish-English/Mexican-American) and now helping my daughter with my granddaughter as she is becoming trilingual (English-Spanish-Samoan). Here is a link to our website for more information: www.puentes.biz
Trudy McGavin,
Director, Puentes Language Programs, LLC
208.344.4270 / www.puentes.biz

Our bilingual family would like to be included in the Playgroup Directory. The group we are starting is called BB Gathering NJ. We are located in Edison, New Jersey, United States. The languages we speak are (American) English and Chinese (both Mandarin and Cantonese). You as well as others who are interested can go to our website at www.freewebs.com/bbgatheringnj for more information. Thank you for your consideration,
Doreen

Congratulations Anneke from Language Lizard...
I was recently interviewed by a reporter/producer of Public Radio International’s “The World” (co-produced by BBC, PRI and WGBH).

In addition to his radio work, he produces a podcast entitled “The World in Words”. Portions of our interview (about Language Lizard) were included in the most recent podcast.

If you’re interested in hearing the podcast, you can link to it via one of the following links (Note: The interview starts about 5 minutes into the podcast after the Hispanic Heritage Month/Football story):
- Link to PRI’s The World website www.theworld.org language. Then click on “The World in Words 22: Teaching your kid to read in Urdu and teaching yourself to sing in Spanish”
- Or go directly to the following link: www.theworld.org/pod?language/WIWpodcast22.mp3
- Or it’s on The World in Words on iTunes at: phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=279833390

Other parts of the interview will appear on PRI’s The World broadcast as well as a future podcast.
Best,
Anneke

We want to know what you think! Which articles do you enjoy the most? Did any impact you positively or negatively? Let us know! Email us at info@multilingualliving.com and tell us your thoughts!

Note that we reserve the right to edit your message for grammar and length if we include it in Multilingual Living Magazine.
Hand in Hand
This is a fun game for the whole family and easy for the little ones! Children from all over the world hold hands in this game, and two dice will decide who’s next: a boy or a girl, with or without a hat. It contains 36 picture boards, 2 dices with symbols and instructions. You can also vary this game and play different versions of memory with older children. Age 3+.

Das Ravensburger Buch der Advents- und Weihnachtsgeschichten
This beautiful anthology is filled with lots of stories, songs and poems for the Christmas time. They are telling from Santa Claus and snowmen, fairies and gnomes, angels and Christmas trees, and, of course, from the Holy Night.

Different authors like Janosch, James Krüss, Otfried Preussler, Ursel Scheffler contributed to this 164 p. book, just to name a few. A nice book to share the Christmas spirit with your loved ones, regardless of age.

Die Jahreszeiten
This book is the 10th of a series called Wieso? Weshalb? Warum? Junior which is for children aged 2+. The four seasons are nicely shown and explained in different settings that are known to a child of this age. The book helps the child understand why, for example, we have to dress warm in winter, not in summer and what are goose bumps. There are many lift-a-flaps that reveal more details and are fun to find.
Max auf dem Mond + Max und der Zauberer
- Doppelpack

Max on the Moon and Max and the Magician can be played in the four languages German, English, French and Spanish and are for children aged 4-8 years. The illustrations are hand drawn and full of details. In each game Max has to look for something: either moon chickens, to help his friend Mona who is stranded with her spaceship on the moon in order to get her keys back from the man in the moon or, help his friend the Magician find the right spell to become a person again. It is easy to play and especially good for computer beginners. For PC and MAC.

Mäuseschläu & Bärenstark
Wissen, Lachen, Sachen machen

A fun board game that gets you moving! The rules are simple and the whole game lasts about 15-20 min. Mouse cards will ask you interesting questions, e.g., when do we see a rainbow?, while Bear cards will ask you to do silly actions like flying like a butterfly around the game table. The clock has to be set if you pick a card and you’ll learn to tell time in no time!

The game contains of 1 board, 6 figures, 1 Clock, 80 cards and instructions. Age 5+. 

We offer a wide selection of popular German children books, CDs/DVDs, toys, games & more products imported from Germany in our store and invite you to browse! Our quality merchandise has been carefully selected to encourage children of any age to read, learn, and/or play with German language products, especially in a bilingual environment. Most of our products are in stock for fast and economical shipping, including optional gift wrap service. We ship worldwide and accept major credit cards, Paypal, checks or money order.

Do you need a special book or other German product? Contact us and we will do our best to find it!
Did you know...

… that Dave Kunst was the first man to walk around the world? Starting in Waseca, Minnesota on 20 June 1970, he completed the journey in 4 years, 3 months and 16 days. He wore out 21 pairs of shoes in more than 20 million steps to cover 23,250 km (14,450 miles). He is known as the Earthwalker.

… that the shortest French word with all five vowels is “oiseau” meaning bird?

… that there are only four words in the English language which end in “-dous”: tremendous, horrendous, stupendous, and hazardous?

… that the term “Mayday” used for signaling for help (after SOS), it comes from the French term “M’aidez” which is pronounced “MayDay” and means, “Help Me”?

… that Police dogs are trained to react to commands in a foreign language; commonly German but more recently Hungarian or some other Slavic tongue?

… that the language Malayalam, spoken in parts of India, is the only language whose name is a palindrome?

… that some biblical scholars believe that Aramaic (the language of the ancient Bible) did not contain an easy way to say “many things” and therefore used a term which has come down to us as 40? This means that when the bible -- in many places -- refers to “40 days,” they meant many days?

… that Scottish is the language called Gaelic, whereas Irish is actually called Gaeilge?

… that Swahili is a combination of African tribal languages, Arabic and Portuguese?

Nü Shu

Until recently, women in Jiangyong County in Hunan province of southern China were discouraged from learning Nan Shu “men’s writing,” that is, the Chinese written language. Nü Shu was therefore invented by women and used secretly, carefully guarded from men. Women learned the writing from their “sworn sisters” and mothers. The language was suppressed by the Japanese in the 1940s, out of fear that the Chinese could use the language to send secret messages. After the Chinese Revolution, when literacy spread among women, Nü Shu fell into disuse and the line of transmission was broken.

Typical contents of the writings were autobiographies, letters, folk songs, monody, or narration. Unlike the standard written Chinese, which is logographic (with each character representing a word or part of a word), Nü Shu is phonetic, with each of its approximately 600-700 characters representing a syllable in the local Chéngguān dialect. Although Nü Shu has existed for centuries, it was not known to the outside world until recently, when academics “rediscovered” the script in a report to the central government in 1983. Scholars have since been able to collate only 2000 characters, a fraction of the total.

Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nü_Shu
**Indo-European: A temperate language?**

Around half of the world’s population speaks a language that is originally derived from Indo-European, a language spoken as early as 4,000 B.C. Scholars assume that Indo-European originated in a temperate climate, because languages descending from it have common words for cold, snow, and winter, but not for tropical plants and animals like rice, palm, and tiger.

**Puertorriqueno**

- Puerto Ricans consider themselves American but are fiercely proud of their island and their culture. They don’t usually call themselves Americans or “Americanos,” but “Puertorriquenos” or “Boricuas;”
- To most Puerto Ricans, “my country” means “Puerto Rico,” not the United States. Often it is known that Puerto Rican descendants call themselves Puerto Ricans. “I am Puerto Rican, but I wasn’t born there.”
- The term “Nuyorican” is used to identify New Yorkers born in Puerto Rico or of Puerto Rican descent who live in or near New York City. The word Nuyorican derives from a combination of the words “New York” and “Puerto Rican.”

**Oredr of the Itteers?**

Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch procejt at Cmabrigde Unervtisy, it deosnt mtaer waht oredr the itteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat itteer be in the rghit pclae. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter.

---

**Cherokee alphabet**

Sequoyah, a Cherokee Indian, invented an alphabet for the Cherokee language, the only person known to have single-handedly invented an alphabet for a living language. It took him 12 years to invent an 86-character alphabet, more accurately described as a syllabary, since each symbol represented a syllable. It could be learned in a few days, and only a few months after its introduction, thousands of Cherokee had become literate.

“Language is the means of getting an idea from my brain into yours without surgery.”  
Mark Amidon

---

**Anglo-Norman language**

The Anglo-Norman language is a term traditionally used to refer to the variety of French used in England and to some extent elsewhere in the British Isles following the Norman conquest in 1066. When William the Conqueror invaded England, he, his nobles, and many of his followers from Normandy spoke an Oïl language called Norman. This developed into the unique insular dialect now known as Anglo-Norman, which was commonly used for administrative purposes from the 13th until the 15th century. Although English survived and eventually eclipsed Anglo-Norman, the latter had been sufficiently widespread as to permanently affect English lexically. This is why English has lost many original Germanic words which can still be found in German and Dutch.

Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Norman_language
**Speaking Your Language!**

What would you give for your health care provider to understand the unique circumstances of your multilingual/multicultural family? Better yet, what if your provider could speak your family’s second language? If your language is Spanish, then there may be some hope for you and your family. A one-of-a-kind program at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas is breaking down language barriers and paving the way for better care. The three-semester Medical Spanish course benefits not only the patients who can now receive treatment, but also the doctors, who are no longer limited in the people they can help. “When they see that I do speak Spanish, you see a definite relief and opening up of their comfort level,” says Emily Pratt, a physician assistant student in the program. She believes that two-way communication is the key to better care. “If they are comfortable in the environment, they are going to get well quicker.” That’s one of the goals of the Medical Spanish classes for PAs developed by UT Southwestern linguist Cristina González. She says, “I try to teach my students to think more in Spanish than to think in English, because it’s not a translation of one language to the other ... You are really conveying meaning, not words per se.” Source: [www.sciencedaily.com/videos/2007/0311-medical_students_get_training_in_spanish.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/videos/2007/0311-medical_students_get_training_in_spanish.htm)

**Language Learning: like riding a bike**

“People have always thought that the human capacity to learn language simply disappears as the brain ages,” says Rachel Mayberry of McGill University, the leader of a study to see how the onset and type of initial language experience affects the ability to learn a new language. “Our research shows that when the young brain learns language, it develops a lifelong capacity to learn language. When the young brain does not experience language, this language learning capacity does not fully develop.” “The timing of our initial language experience during our development – whatever the form of those experiences – strongly influences our capacity to learn language throughout our lives,” says Mayberry. Source: [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2002/05/020502072204.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2002/05/020502072204.htm)

**Using Language to Sell the Product**

Businesses around the world are always looking for the next best way to market their products to an international community. For countries where the populace speaks more than one language, advertisers are taking advantage of language nuances to appeal to buyers. Authors of a study conducted in India state, “We find that while the Hindi language is associated with “belongingness” (close, personal, friendly, family), English is associated with “sophistication” (global, cosmopolitan, urban, upper class).” Participants associated “belongingness” with necessities, such as detergent, and the researchers found that ads for detergent were more effective when the ads were partially or fully in Hindi. In contrast, when the product being marketed was a luxury item – chocolate in the case of this study – participants reacted more favorably to ads that were in English. Keep an eye out for multilingual-targeted advertising in your neck of the woods – let us know if you feel more inclined to purchase the product. Source: [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/09/080915143322.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/09/080915143322.htm)
Ahhs & Oohs Make All the Difference

What does branding and linguistics have to do with one another? Look at the names of products and pharmaceuticals that surround us and it starts to make sense. Researchers have identified that vowel sounds are key in identifying the characteristics of a product. Front vowel sounds are ones that are made with the tongue forward in the mouth, such as the sound of the letter “i” in mill. Back vowel sounds are ones that are made with the tongue farther back in the mouth, such as the “a” sound in mall. Numerous prior studies have shown that the two types of vowel sounds tend to be associated with different concepts that are strikingly uniform, even across cultures. Front vowel sounds convey small, fast, or sharp characteristics, while back vowel sounds convey large, slow, or dull characteristics.

The researchers created fictitious brand names that varied only by one vowel sound (e.g. nillen/nallen). They then varied product categories between small, fast, sharp objects—such as knives or convertibles—and products that are large, slow, and dull, such as hammers and SUVs. They asked participants to choose which of the word pair they thought was a better brand name for the product. Overwhelmingly, participants preferred words with front vowel sounds when the product category was a convertible or a knife (by about a 2:1 margin), but preferred words with back vowel sounds when the product category was an SUV or hammer (again, by about a 2:1 margin). The researchers also tested a vowel sound that is generally associated with negative meaning (e.g., the “yoo” sound in the word “putrid”). Regardless of product category, words this vowel sound were least preferred by consumers.


Bilingual Realization

Despite much research on acquisition of languages amongst monolingual persons, scientists still have to ask themselves basic questions about bilingual acquisition: How do babies realise that they are in a bilingual environment? What are the clues for them in discovering this? How is discrimination between languages produced in infants? “We have just begun research in this line and working with children requires taking it slowly, the prior preparation period being very long”, explains Dr. Itziar Laka, leader of La Mente Bilingüe (“the bilingual brain”) research team at the Faculty of Arts of the University of the Basque Country that is analyzing bilingual processing of language. The aim is to find out how the brain acquires and manages languages and to discover in what way languages being similar or different is influential in this process.

In October 2007 they began the BRAINGLOT project, focusing on bilingualism, in collaboration with numerous research teams and under the coordinating leadership of Dr. Nuria Sebastián from the University of Barcelona. Currently work is being carried out with small children of four, five and six and the aim is to undertake the study with even younger children. “In fact, we start to be fluent in a language before birth; if we wait for a child to say its first words in order to study the acquisition process for or the initiation of a language, it is too late,” states Dr. Laka. This project aims to answer questions such as: How are languages organized in the brain? Does there exist some interchange of influences between them? Is it important that the languages are similar or not? When is a second language learnt?

Source: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/06/080630093618.htm
Harvest Festivals Around the World
In Ancient Greece the goddess of agriculture, Demeter, was the center of the harvest festival known as Thesmosphoria. In the mythical story, Demeter’s daughter, Persephone, was taken by Hades to the underworld. While there, she shared a piece of fruit with Hades. The gods did not like this and punished her by making her spend half of the year in the underworld. Thus, winter came when she was in the underworld; spring and summer blessed the land while she was on Earth. As part of the festival, a feast was held. Pigs, seed, corn, fruit and cakes were offered to Demeter in the hopes that she would grant the people a good harvest.

In Ancient Egypt, the harvest took place in the springtime. The Egyptians celebrated their festival in honor of their god of vegetation and fertility, Min. The most important part of this ceremony was the symbolic act of the Pharaoh cutting the first sheaf, or bundle, of grain. This act ensured that everyone would have plenty of food. The pharaoh also took part in a parade which was followed by music, dancing and sports.

Chu Suk is a Korean harvest celebration which is considered the Korean Thanksgiving. It is held on the 15th day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar. Memorial services are held during which family members visit the tombs of their ancestors and offer them rice and fruit. There is a special feast to show thanks for each other. The feast starts with a family gathering at which “Songphyun” is served. These are special rice cakes made of rice, beans, sesame seeds, and chestnuts. The eve of Chu Suk is called Kang Kang Sue Wol Lae. During this ceremony women make a circle and sing and dance. They wear their best hanbok. People also have wrestling, archery, folk music, and they play a game called turtle tag. Chu Suk is the time to celebrate the family and give thanks for their blessings.

In Southern India, Pongal is a four-day harvest festival — one of the most joyful events. In Tamil Nadu, newly harvested rice is ceremonially cooked. In Karnataka, the festival is called ‘Sankranti,’ when cows and bullocks are gaily decorated and fed on Pongal, a sweet preparation of rice. In the evening, the cattle are led out in procession to the beat of drums and music. Each of the four days of Pongal have their own significance as separate deities are worshipped on each day.

In Ghana the Yam Festival (Homowo) lasts three days. The festival begins with a cleansing ceremony to honor family members who have died. Farmers give thanks to the gods who ensure a good harvest. Twins and triplets are honored during this time as a special gift from God. During homowo people wear a kind of toga made from kente cloth which is brightly colored. The festival ends with a big feast when people dance and sing to the sounds of drums.

Succoth is a Jewish harvest festival which begins on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Tishri (late September to late October) and lasts for seven days. This festival dates back to the period during which Hebrews wandered in the wilderness on route to Canaan (now Israel). During their pilgrimage, they lived in temporary “booths,” open living spaces called a sukkot. These sukkot were also places for worship and to share meals. Modern Jewish communities continue the traditions of building sukkot and holding festivities inside them. Three sides of the sukkot are covered with blue and gold fabric and the roofs are built with olive and other tree branches. The branches are decorated with fruits and flowers. During Succoth, families gather for meals and sleep inside their sukkot. A special ceremony is held each day to remember Hebrew ancestors and to thank God for the harvest.
My trilingual four-year-old son Milo is about to start his *moyenne section d’école maternelle* (second year of kindergarten), and he cannot wait to go back to school. His first year has been a successful experience, mostly because we were lucky to have found a school where his multilingualism is cherished and not perceived as an obstacle. We live in Paris in the 15th district. Milo’s school is a public, medium sized institution, with 200 kids aged 3 to 6, spread among 7 classes averaging 28 kids each. Bilingual and/or bi-national kids represent 25% of this school population in average, with peaks of 30% in some classes. This is due partly to expats residing temporarily in the region and partly to second generation as well as recent immigrants settling in the city. In Milo’s class alone last year there were 9 bilingual kids out of the 28, of which only a few actively spoke the additional family language, while the rest were mostly passive bilinguals.

“I have seen a steady increase in multilingual kids attending this school in the last 10 years,” explains Madame Ledur, the school principal, “and we have made it a school objective to properly address this trend, by ensuring that these kids integrate as fast as possible into the school environment and benefit just as much as the monolinguals of all the language development instruments available for this age. Our objective is that by the end of the three-year cycle, they can start CP (*Cours préparatoire* or primary school) with a good fluency in French and a solid verbal base to be able to learn how to write.”

To do so, Madame Ledur has introduced a section in the application form where parents can list the languages spoken by each child, as well as the parents’ nationalities. This, together with a personal, ongoing, open dialogue between the teacher and the parents, allows the institution to properly asses the level of fluency in French of any given kid and customize certain activities.

Secondly, weekly ‘Language Groups’ of up to 6 kids are held for both bilinguals with a weak command of French as well as French monolinguals who are shy or with a language delay. The idea is to provide them with a smaller audience, which is less intimidating than a class of 28, and which gives them the chance to express themselves. The teachers and the principal take turns in animating these groups, comment with the children illustrations relating to their daily life, providing them with vocabulary, correcting the pronunciation and the grammar while introducing action verbs.

“These groups have proven very successful,” says Madame Ledur “and we see a real evolution from the beginning to the end of the year, especially for the *petit section* (i.e. first year of kindergarten, aged 3).” Milo indeed attended them for the first semester; his French was good, but he...
did not pronounce certain liaisons, and sometimes he would have the wrong gender for a word. Some of the most common difficulties in French at this age for bilinguals are indeed related to sentence structure, gender of nouns and pronunciation.

“It greatly depends upon the families’ level of motivation” says maître Jean Grigorieff, an eclectic piano player and polyglot himself, teaching one of the classes in the Petit Section last year. “There are parents who do not speak French at all themselves; this obviously does not help the child. We also see parents that are French or speak French perfectly, but they do not take the time to correct their kids when they make mistakes in French, and we see this related very much to their education level.”

The teachers’ approach toward the multilingual kids in the classroom varies greatly: “I tend to ignore it, in the sense that from the beginning I address everyone the same, making sure the bilinguals feel very much included in the class’ activities but not singled out as different. I, however, make sure to make repeated individual eye contact with those with a poor command of French, repeating two or three times the sentences if I sense they have not understood, and putting emphasis on gestures,” explained maîtresse Cecile Diaz, an experienced, very warm teacher.

Jean Grigorieff, on the other hand, leverages off his Japanese, Russian and English speaking skills to make the occasional Japanese, Czech or English student in the class feels as much at home as possible, and he receives positive appreciative responses.

Maîtresse Diaz and maître Grigorieff did not receive any special training for dealing with multilingual kids; however, Madame Diaz did attend a conference cycle entitled “Welcoming non-francophone pupils,” where emphasis was put on developing an ongoing dialogue with the families and providing individual attention to the kids.

The outcomes vary greatly from situation to situation. In general, the kids tend to want to fit in and so they pick up fast on vocabulary, slang, attitudes and interaction dynamics by imitating their monolingual French classmate; they do not manifest their additional cultural identity unless asked. Maître Jean encourages the parents of bilingual kids at the beginning of the year to celebrate with the class any event that is culturally relevant to them, such as Ramadan or the Cherry Blossom Festival. He feels this is enriching for the monolingual kids, as well as a way to make the multilingual kids feel welcome and appreciated. In general, those who arrive in September without speaking a word of French, within four months manage to develop a full understanding of French and by year-end they speak as well.

Cecile Diaz advises parents to avoid changing school at mid-year, if possible: “It’s very important that the kids all start and learn at the same time; at age three a monolingual still has a great deal of language development ahead of himself, therefore the progress potential for a monolingual and a bilingual is very similar. Starting at mid-year is stressful for a monolingual kid, if on top of it there is a language shock, it can be catastrophic for bilingual kids. At age four and five, when the maternal language is already in place, they can develop inferiority complexes if thrown in a new linguistic environment.”

This wasn’t Milo’s case, luckily, who now not only pronounces the liaisons correctly, but he’s starting to correct me when I mispronounce a French word!

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Mother’s Language</th>
<th>Father’s Language</th>
<th>Active Languages</th>
<th>Passive Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Algerian Arabic</td>
<td>Algerian Arabic</td>
<td>Algerian Arabic, French</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>French, English</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Portuguese, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>French, Italian, Dutch</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Moroccan Arabic</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>French, Moroccan Arabic</td>
<td>Moroccan Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 quadrilingual, and is currently enjoying being a “foreigner” again in jolly France! Learn more at her blog: multitonguekids.blogspot.com/
1. Can you tell us a little of your personal background, and how you came to write this book?

I say it took less than a year to write the book—but more than 20 years to do the research for it! Raising a bilingual child is a bit like a Goldilocks story. Some people think it’s too hard—so they don’t attempt it—and some people think it’s too easy—so they don’t do the relatively simple things they need to do. I wanted to write something to show parents and other caregivers that it’s not too hard and not too easy, but “just right.”

It’s not “rocket science,” but it’s also not a slam-dunk. A child rarely becomes bilingual as a child without the parent intending it and acting to make it happen. People often ask me if I was raised bilingually, or if I raised my children bilingually. The answer to both questions is “no.” We lived in Miami, and I thought the children would become bilingual without my doing anything to make it happen—but I was wrong.

As it happens, my two children and I are bilingual. That is, we have lived at some point (or in the case of my son who married into a Cuban family, he is living) in two languages – thinking, dreaming, joking and maybe cursing in another language. But all three of us started our second-language learning in school. I grew up in New York in a town with many Russian (bilingual) émigrés; we also had long-term visitors from abroad, like a Japanese exchange student, a French au pair (who wanted to learn English), and other students from Europe who would stay with us. I was always jealous of their ability to switch back and forth between their two languages. I went to Middlebury College aiming to spend my junior year in France—so that I could become bilingual, too. Not all the Americans that were with me in Paris that year got good enough to be called bilingual, but I made sure that I did.

Many years later at the University of Miami, Kim Oller and I brought together a group of psychologists and linguists in the Bilingualism Study Group. Over the years, these colleagues and I learned so many fascinating
things about bilingual children. I wanted to share some of them with parents, both the parents of the children who participated in our studies and also a more general audience.

2. **Is it possible to become bilingual as an adult? Or are the “real” bilinguals only those who have been raised in two or more languages since birth?**

Who are the real bilinguals?? There are definitely degrees of being bilingual and I don’t think anyone knows where foreign language learning slides into bilingual learning. We have clear mental pictures of people who are bilingual, and people who aren’t, but we can’t really put our finger on a boundary between the two. As I said above, my personal litmus test is whether you can directly experience interactions in two (or more) languages – thinking, dreaming, and so forth in both – or whether you have to translate from one language to the other.

Many, many people become bilingual as adults. One certainly can’t become a “child” or “infant” bilingual as an adult, but it’s never too late to learn another language, and eventually become bilingual. Even for adults it is usually better to do so in an immersion situation, where one lives surrounded by real-life interactions in the “other” language, but older children and adults can also use other analytical skills that aren’t available to younger children to help them understand the second language, so they can also get some benefits from books and formal lessons. To the extent, though, that language is an activity that one learns by doing, thinking about the language is not the same as thinking in the language, and so formal study is rarely a substitute for informal situations where the “language happens.”

Child bilinguals do seem special, though. Their bilingualism is so natural. I recommend that parents begin as early as possible because it is easier for the child than it will be later. It is also helpful for the parents to set up their household patterns from the beginning, so it doesn’t involve a change. Changing habits is always more difficult than not changing them.

3. **Is it possible for one parent to teach two languages simultaneously to a child, or is that not advisable?**

We certainly know it’s possible, because people do it. For me the question is time, not separation. One-parent-one-language, which separates the languages by person, is often convenient, but not required. In the Minority Language at Home strategy, children are quite successful speaking two languages to the same people depending on where they are and who else is with them. A parent providing exposure to two languages also probably has to make a bigger commitment to the language strategies they adopt because there’s less of a time margin. They have to make more of their interactions count.

4. **How much exposure is enough exposure for a child to become bilingual? I am wondering about the famous 20%. Put in practical terms, what exactly does that mean?**

The bottom line in learning a language is time spent hearing and speaking in a language, –you can’t learn to speak a language well in just a couple of hours a week. But 20% is not set in stone. Other labs (like Janet Werker’s in British Columbia) use a 30% threshold. They don’t enroll anyone in their bilingualism studies who has less than 30% exposure to their non-dominant language, so I think that’s another way of saying they think it takes 30% exposure for a child to become bilingual. Maria Perez-Bazan in her dissertation at the University of Michigan estimates 90% of the home environment needs to be in the minority language. That probably translates into about 45 or 50% of the child’s time overall. We found 20% to be a minimum for the child being willing not just to respond but to initiate conversations in a language.

Whatever the magic percentage is, the key is that there seems to be a threshold. Up to a certain point, amount of exposure is essential, and after that point, it’s less important.

On the other hand, as I put in the book (Chapter 4), there are other considerations besides time. It’s also important how much the child wants to speak a lan-
language, who speaks it with her or him. Children can tell when a language isn’t important to other people, and it loses importance to them, too. These other factors are less potent than time, but they have an influence, too.

5. The myth that multilingualism leads to language delay is particularly difficult to root out. In your book, you mention that some behavior on the part of bilinguals is rather common. Can one say that what may qualify as common behavior on the part of bilinguals is often mistaken for language delay? Is it possible that the root of the problem is the definition of the term “language delay” and parents simply not knowing what that language delay really encompasses?

You are very right that we do not have good benchmarks for bilinguals, and so typical development is sometimes “diagnosed” as delay. As you know, I spent a lot of time on this question in the book: Chapter 6 is about “special needs” children and Chapter 7 looks at the research on possible language delay from as many different viewpoints as I could think of (and that the editor would let me include). We can’t fault parents for not knowing what language delay really encompasses, because it’s not just one thing, and it’s not “black and white.”

Language delay takes different forms in different languages, but I would have to agree that in many languages, the markers of delay for monolinguals are also things that take bilinguals a little longer to master as well. When a child has fulltime input, difficulty with these things can show that the child is not processing language very well, but difficulty with the same language elements for a child with part-time input can usually be attributed to a child not having yet had a chance to learn those features.

6. At the same time, this puts us parents in somewhat of a fix. How can we tell whether our children’s language behavior is normal, and simply a result of the fact that they haven’t had enough exposure to a language, or whether there is indeed a problem – without having to consult an expert (who may not be understanding of our multilingual situation)? Or is consulting a speech therapist the only option that we have when we have concerns like that?

I think when parents have concerns, they should speak first with other parents and/or relatives with older children and who are familiar with bilingual upbringing. They very often have a longer-range view. (That’s one of the things that is so wonderful about websites like MLM.) However, studies show that there is relatively little knowledge and a lot of misinformation about language development in the general public, so it makes sense to consult therapists, who devote time and study to language development. In the best of all possible worlds, there would be speech therapists familiar with typical bilingual development who could advise them. But even those people have a hard time, because there are no standardized materials that they can administer to the child and say, “see, it says here that everything is okay (—or not okay).” They have to use their professional judgment. But we live with uncertainty in other parts of our lives, too. As with a doctor, I suggest getting a second opinion when possible and weighing the two opinions in light of your own common sense and experience.

7. What about children who grow up with three or more languages simultaneously: is their language acquisition different from that of bilinguals or is there really no difference?

Less is known about bilinguals than monolinguals, and less about trilinguals than bilinguals, but so far there is nothing that appears different for children learning three languages simultaneously. There are now several groups around the world turning their attention to trilinguals, so more information will be available soon, I’m sure.

8. We often hear and receive the advice that we do not need to concern ourselves with the majority language because our children will pick it up automatically anyway; after all, children “soak languages up like sponges”. You point out that this is a common
myth, and that children do need to put in some effort to learn a language. What does this mean for the majority language, though: should we be actively fostering it as well?

It’s motive and opportunity, again. Children don’t get a language completely for free, they have to use it. Motive and opportunity for them to use the majority language abound. We have yet to find a national culture devoted to silence 24/7. The large task for parents of bilinguals-to-be is to build motive and opportunity for the minority language where it might not exist without their help.

Once again, in the best of all possible worlds, we could be supporting both languages, but in reality, our efforts in favor of the majority language often diminish the minority language in the child’s eyes. My favorite formula (for parents in the U.S.) is minority language at home with a bilingual preschool and then a bilingual school. It would be different elsewhere, as it was for different parents in the examples in my book.

9. All of us have heard the comment about “that immigrant who still cannot speak English after 20 years of living here”. You point out something that we hardly ever think about: namely, that there are not enough programs that teach English to accommodate the demand for them! Can you elaborate on this?

I hear this from a lot of sources, and went on-line to see what current information I could find. It was not hard. According to this document http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/policy/esl.pdf (accessed 8/8/08) even without comprehensive recordkeeping, researchers have established a pattern of long waiting lists for English classes in all regions of the U.S. The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) considers it a civil rights issue and prepares an ongoing report for the U.S. Congress to try to get more resources: http://renewthevra.civilrights.org/resources/ESL.pdf

10. Of all the methods you presented, the MLP (mixed language approach), while successfully used in countries like India and Singapore, may not be our best option. Can you elaborate on this?

For this suggestion, I am leaning on the work of Joshua Fishman and other people involved in what’s called the “language revitalization” movement. When a community wants to reestablish a language that is dying out, like in Hawaii, Ireland, or the Navaho nation, the revitalizationists recommend creating a situation where the weaker language is not in competition with the stronger one (“weaker” and “stronger” in terms of the numbers of speakers). Two equal languages can co-exist, although they usually have their own domains—one language in the home and church, another in the stores and the government, for example. It’s hard for smaller languages to compete with the “killer 8” languages—like English, Arabic, or Chinese. It’s like a mom & pop store trying to compete with a well-financed chain of stores. Unless the small store has a special niche, something to offer that the big-box stores don’t have, the big-boxes win. We see this happening in towns all over the world, with stores, and with languages, too.

11. One of the most popular advice that we like to give (and receive) is that to support a language, we should use a lot of media: TV, DVDs, speaking books, etc – and yet it seems like this is not as effective as we would like to think. Is too much reliance on media support counterproductive?

Motive and opportunity again. Everyone, young or old, needs both of them to learn a 2nd or 5th language. I think different forms of media are great—for motivation. In making a movie or a record or a book, people give special thought to how to make it engaging for children—how to catch their attention and keep it. We say the child was “glued to the TV,” don’t we? Media also give us content, interesting things to talk about. But the important thing to remember is that they don’t substitute for the opportunity to interact with real speakers. Media make it easier and often more enjoyable, but they do not replace live interaction, especially early on. When children are older, reading for example, in addition to being a motivator also becomes an opportunity to increase the child’s exposure to the language. Once we have the basics, we can learn a lot through the written form. (The same is true for movies and CDs, too, I suppose.)
These are 12 myths & misconceptions...

1. Bilingual children start to speak later than monolinguals.

2. Bilinguals start out school behind monolinguals and they never catch up.

3. Young children soak up languages like sponges.

4. Bilinguals are just like two monolinguals in one person.

5. You have to be gifted in languages in order to learn two languages at once.

6. If bilinguals score lower on standardized tests, it shows they have lower aptitude than the average monolingual child.

7. Latino immigrants in the U.S. resist learning English and want everyone to learn to speak Spanish.

8. Some languages are more primitive than others and are therefore easier to learn. The reason so many people can speak English is that English has less grammar than other languages.

9. Speaking a second language is its own reward.

10. Parents who do not speak a language perfectly will pass their errors and their accent on to their children.

11. If a bilingual child experiences any language problems in one or both languages, dropping one of the languages will fix the situation.

12. There’s only one right way to raise a bilingual child.

---

Reprinted with permission from Raising a Bilingual Child, by Barbara Zurer Pearson, Ph.D., p.300

Multilingual Living Magazine — September/October 2008
3. Children seem to have an easier time learning languages than adults, but we should not underestimate the effort it takes and should not expect them to learn perfectly from the beginning.

4. There are special capabilities that bilinguals have that monolinguals do not. Bilinguals very often have one (dominant) language that is comparable to that of a monolingual and another, weaker one, which they use less often. In any conversation, bilinguals choose whether to operate in a monolingual mode or a bilingual mode.

5. Early language learning is not like a talent and does not require a special gift; it’s part of being human, like walking or seeing with two eyes.

6. Standardized tests examine just a part of a bilingual’s language aptitude (i.e. just one language) and compare it to a monolingual’s entire language aptitude. Average scores for bilinguals do not take into account different patterns of language dominance. There are, as of this writing, no standardized tests that are appropriate for use with bilingual children.

7. Very few Latino immigrants do not speak English; there are not enough programs that teach English to accommodate the demand for them. Programs that use Spanish as well as English do so in part because it helps children learn English faster and better.

8. There is no such thing as a primitive language or a language without “grammar.” All languages are infinitely complex and yet learnable.

9. This may be true, but we cannot expect children to see it that way. We must make it meaningful for them to know the language by providing contact with interesting people doing fascinating things in the second language.

10. This might be true only if the child never heard any other speakers, which is unlikely to happen with parents who are nonnative speakers of either a majority or a minority language.

11. There is no evidence that this is so. Children who have problems with two languages generally also have them with one.

12. Parents are the experts in this field. The only wrong way to raise a bilingual child is not to do it. If you haven’t already, now is the time to start.
I’m 31 years old, biracial, bicultural, and trilingual (English, Hungarian, and Ibo). My mother is Hungarian and my dad is Nigerian. I was born in Hungary and I spoke only Hungarian until I was four, when my family moved to Nigeria. My parents used the “Home Language/Outside Language” strategy, although I don’t believe they did this on purpose: Hungarian was simply the language they had always spoken to one another. I remember that my mother started teaching us English within months of our arrival, so that we would have at least acquired a basic vocabulary by the time we started school a month later. I can still recall sitting in the classroom feeling lost, unable to understand the teacher who spoke English to me or the other kids who spoke Ibo. I can’t remember when I started understanding them, but I do know that before the first term was over, I was fluent in both languages.

At the age of 18, I returned to Hungary to go to college and met my husband Adam, who is Hungarian and has intermediate knowledge of English.

When our first son Daniel was born, I didn’t even give a thought to what language I would speak to him. Since Adam and I spoke Hungarian with one another, I naturally spoke Hungarian to Dani as well. Language started becoming an issue as he grew and communicated more. I found that I wasn’t good at expressing my emotions in Hungarian, and I often found myself speaking English when I was feeling more emotional (happy or angry). I started longing to be able to read and sing to Dani in English, but I didn’t dare so because he was a “late talker” (all the kids I knew that were his age were already making sentences, whereas he barely said words: he only imitated sounds made by objects). When he was almost two and I was pregnant with our second baby boy, we took a trip to the United States, and it was there that I discovered how very important it was to me that I be able to speak “my” language to my children. (I find it interesting that even though technically Hungarian is my mother tongue, I can express myself better in English, and it is the language I consider “closest” to me.) We only stayed three weeks, but linguistically, Dani picked up a lot during this time.

Once we returned, I started to research the topic of bilingualism and to investigate whether it would be okay for me to switch to speaking English with Dani, and how to proceed with the switch. I found a lot of information online and read tons of books on the subject. This research helped me to understand a lot about myself, too. It was great to read about experiences so similar to mine and to understand the reasons behind my attitude toward language and culture, but that’s another story.

We decided to use a gradual process (it took some work to convince my husband that Dani would not suffer any intellectual damage as a result of this change), so when Abel was born, I began to speak English to him, and watched to see Dani’s reaction. I was surprised, to say the least: he seemed fascinated, and always asked what I was saying to the baby. He enjoyed it when I read to him in English, even though he couldn’t understand much at that point. As he grew, he began to ask what this or that was in English, but the most amazing phenomenon was how he tried to speak to Abel in English. I believe he thought Abel wouldn’t understand if he spoke to him in Hungarian. The family was supportive, though dubious of my decision. I remember how my mother did not believe that Dani actually understood English until one day, at her house, she was telling Adam what she had made for lunch. She then added, in English, that she had made pancakes, too (not wanting Dani to understand). Dani called out that he wanted his pancakes with cocoa and jam.

Dani is five now and understands a lot, although he isn’t willing to speak English to anyone unless he is one hundred percent sure the person doesn’t speak Hungarian. Abel, who just turned three, speaks and understands both languages.

At this point, our language structure is as follows: Adam speaks Hungarian to both boys, the boys speak Hungarian to one another, and I speak only English to Abel, but I speak both English and Hungarian to Dani (I address them both in English, and then I often repeat the words, in Hungarian, to Dani). With that said, of course, the community language is Hungarian. We read books in both languages. Usually, at bedtime,
we read one English and one Hungarian book, and the boys watch and listen mostly to English DVDs and CDs.

I know it’s a strange situation, and people often question whether it is indeed good for the boys, but, so far, it works for us. There are times when I’m not so sure of this, but something always happens to reassure me that it’s worth the effort, such as hearing the boys switch to English while acting out a story they heard in English, or when Abel gives me a hug and says, “Love you, Mommy,” then turns to his dad and says, “szeretlek, Apa”.

It is difficult to maintain a balance between the use of each language, since I’m their only “human” source of English at the moment. I haven’t had luck finding other families or playgroups here. I try not to worry too much about how well they speak one language or the other, and, although I hope gradually to be able to switch to speaking solely English to both kids, I want this to be as natural a process as it can be.

Dorothy Lannert is of Hungarian/Nigerian descent. She grew up in Nigeria and moved back to Budapest, Hungary about thirteen years ago. She is married to Adam and has two boys, Daniel (5) and Abel (3). She has an MA in English and American Studies, and worked as an ESL teacher, teaching mostly adults, for six years. Dorothy spent the last five years as a stay-at-home mother but is now back in school, studying to become a special educator specializing in teaching children with autism.
Call for Submissions
Do you have a knack for writing?

If you have a multilingual family, enjoy writing, and are interested in contributing to our magazine, we would like to hear from you!

We seek short articles up to 800 words in which you report about the daily joys and challenges of raising children in more than one language.

Please contact Alice for more information:
editor@multilingualliving.com

We also seek research articles or articles by experts. These may be longer (max. 1500 words). Articles should be geared towards our audience in style and should not be too academic/technical in language (academic articles may be published on our website instead).

Please note that we do not publish articles if its main aim is to advertise a business or product.

For this purpose you may purchase advertising space.

Please contact Corey for info:
info@multilingualliving.com

If you have products which you would like us to review for free, please contact Corey at:
info@multilingualliving.com

We are currently unable to pay any of our writers, but regular contributors receive a free subscription to our magazine.
Autumn

The word autumn comes from the Old French word autumpne (automne in modern French), and was later normalized to the original Latin word autunnus. There are rare examples of its use as early as the 14th century, but it became common by the 16th century.

Before the 16th century, harvest was the term usually used to refer to the season. However as more people gradually moved from working the land to living in towns (especially those who could read and write, the only people whose use of language we now know), the word harvest lost its reference to the time of year and came to refer only to the actual activity of reaping, and fall, as well as autumn, began to replace it as a reference to the season.

The alternative word fall is now mostly a North American English word for the season. It traces its origins to old Germanic languages. The exact derivation is unclear, the Old English fæll or feallan and the Old Norse fall all being possible candidates. However, these words all have the meaning “to fall from a height” and are clearly derived either from a common root or from each other. The term came to denote the season in the 16th century, a contraction of Middle English expressions like “fall of the leaf” and “fall of the year”.

During the 17th century, English immigration to the colonies in North America was at its peak, and the new settlers took their language with them. While the term fall gradually became obsolescent in Britain, it became the more common term in North America, where autumn is nonetheless preferred in scientific and often in literary contexts.

Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autumn

Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is one of the most diverse countries on Earth, with over 850 indigenous languages and at least as many traditional societies. And this is out of a population of just under 6 million! It is also one of the most rural, with only 18 per cent of its people living in urban centres. The country is also one of the world’s least explored, culturally and geographically, and many undiscovered species of plants and animals are thought to exist in the interior of Papua New Guinea.

There are three official languages for Papua New Guinea. English is an official language, and is the language of government and the education system, but it is not widely spoken. The primary lingua franca of the country is Tok Pisin, in which much of the debate in Parliament is conducted. The only area where Tok Pisin is not prevalent is the southern region of Papua, where people often use the third official language, Hiri Motu.

Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papua_New_Guinea
"WHY TWELVE DOLLARS A YEAR?"

A few people have asked us why we charge $12 a year for a subscription to our digital publication...

"YOU DON'T HAVE ANY PRINTING COSTS! SO WHY CHARGE US ANYTHING?"

"MY 12 ISSUE A YEAR PRINT MAGAZINE IS ONLY TWELVE DOLLARS A YEAR!"

Take a look in your favorite magazines and you will probably see that they have pages and pages of advertisements. Those advertisements make it possible for publishers to charge you, the reader, as little as possible. Since those magazines have tens (or even hundreds) of thousands of readers, they can charge their advertisers a lot of money and you less.

For small magazines like ours, we have a much smaller readership and therefore, we also have fewer advertisers. But we still have costs to cover! We have software to purchase, web servers to keep up, photos to purchase and much, much more! And did you know that EVERYONE at Multilingual Living Magazine is putting in their time, effort and expertise for FREE? WE ARE ALL VOLUNTEERS! We do this for FREE, day in and day out, every month of the year!

YOU CAN HELP! How? Tell everyone you know about Multilingual Living Magazine! Subscribe! Before you know it, we will be able to get this magazine into print by filling some of our pages with those advertisers who will help cover our printing (and other ongoing) costs. To all of you who are subscribers: THANK YOU!

Not a subscriber? Go to: www.biculturalfamily.org/subscriptions.html (by the way, it only costs $12 a year)

Land of the Rising Sun

The Japanese names for Japan are Nippon and Nihon. Nippon is used for most official purposes, including on Japanese money, postage stamps, and for many international sporting events. Nihon is a more casual term and the most frequently used in contemporary speech. Both Nippon and Nihon literally mean “the sun’s origin”, that is, where the sun originates, and are often translated as the Land of the Rising Sun. This refers to Japan's eastward position relative to China. Before Japan had relations with China, it was known as Yamato and Hi no moto, which means “source of the sun.” The English word “Japan” has a circuitous derivation; but linguists believe it derives in part from the Portuguese recording of the early Mandarin Chinese or Wu Chinese word for Japan: Cipangu, which is rendered in pinyin as Rìběnguó, and literally translates to “country of sun origin.” Cipangu was first mentioned in Europe in the accounts of the travels of Marco Polo who claimed the land was fabulously rich in silver and gold. Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_Japan

PHOTO: “Cipangu” on the 1453 Fra Mauro map, the first known Western depiction of the island.
Parenting in an Adopted Mother Tongue

When a second language comes first

BY NADYA SUSTACHE

From left to right: Celina, Charlie, Kurt, Sawyer, Laura and Lucinda (sharing a horse with her mom).
The first time that Laura Mudd exclaimed “¡Qué cochinada!” to her first-born boy, she wasn’t trying to get away with swearing by doing it in a foreign language. She wanted her children to grow up bilingually. To make that dream a reality, she knew that she could not parent in English, her mother tongue. She would need to adopt Spanish as a new mother tongue and be able to express every single emotion in it, swearwords and all.

Her oldest is now a teenager, and a brother to three other siblings, all of them bilingual. “I’m so thrilled that my children fight in Spanish,” Laura says, grinning. She is an American from Midwestern Illinois, yet she speaks a Spanish that is seasoned with regionalisms from Spain, Nicaragua and Guatemala. That amounts to a lot of word choices, but Laura is selective. Whether happy or upset, her children hear about it in Spanish. They would not have it any other way. “If I speak to them in English, they get mad at me,” she says.

Laura is able to take uncommon pleasure in the most routine of daily experiences, be it fights or hugs, because she’s deeply in love with a foreign language and has the courage to speak it every hour every day. Like her, if you have a native-like competency in another language then you have a gift to give, as early as the day your baby is born. You too could have a multilingual family, even if you don’t live in a foreign country.

To be sure, you would be part of a courageous minority, but by no means be alone. It is unusual for parents to live in their own native country and choose to raise their children in a different mother tongue. The ones that do are exceptionally feisty, comfortable in their own skin, and able to deflect the stares, the pointed questions, and the occasional tinge of self-doubt. They are the language warriors, slashing preconceptions with each word they utter to their children.

Instinct may drive you to sing the old lullabies, to coo and to nurture in the mother tongue. Open the door a bit wider and your instinct will also find the words you need in the other language and help you forget what the rest of the world
expects. That is, of course, until other family members join the conversation.

Communication routines expose the first of many hurdles. Laura’s husband doesn’t speak Spanish, so when the entire family is together they speak English. When Laura addresses one of the children directly, she does so in Spanish, then translates for her husband as needed. Keeping a good sense of humor has helped him stay connected during family conversations. It also helps that Laura treats the family language dynamic as a dance. “It’s an art,” she says. “You have to know when to speak in Spanish and when it’s not worth it. You have to feel the other person.”

As with any dance, there are times when she misses the beat. This is likely to happen when people confront her with comments like, “I don’t know why you have to speak in Spanish all the time.” With practice, she has learned to ease others’ fears by stating that she also ensures that her children are learning English, and learning it well. In most instances, though, strangers hear her speaking Spanish to the children and feel compelled to stop and congratulate them for their effort. Most people nowadays acknowledge the benefits of speaking more than one language in our globalized world. Laura agrees, “The world opens very quickly for the children and they become more aware of differences.”

Parents like Laura want their children to fit in, and to become a part of and not separate from the world that surrounds them. But Laura’s allegiance to Spanish is steady, her resolve firm. As friends come to the house for play dates, she does not miss a beat, translating their English to Spanish, even though her own children fully understand both. It is a determined attempt to keep hers a Spanish home, a rock in a sea of English. Boys collide in the kitchen firing a steady line of “I wants.” One by one, Laura gently translates those into “¿Te gustaría?” Unknown to the playmates, but acknowledged by her own children, the Spanish requests become “Would you like?” A shift happens and Laura remains in full control. It’s a breathtaking maneuver, and one that repeats itself many times a day. “Sometimes I say things in Spanish that come out sounding softer or harsher, but speaking Spanish always makes me think more before I speak, and that is a good thing,” she says.

It is Laura’s good fortune that she is a born talker. A former teacher, she spends a lot of her time reading to her children in Spanish, but even when she’s not around to do the talking, she makes sure that others do. By surrounding herself with other Spanish-speaking moms, she has built a support network – and a living dictionary. This has also allowed her to control her children’s social life with Spanish-speaking friends, something she found to be critical during the baby-to-five-year-old stage. Watching her children play, she is constantly in awe. It’s easier to stand her ground fighting when feeling the pride and self-confidence that comes with doing something extraordinary. Her children expect nothing less.

If you are able to utter words of love, comfort, wisdom, and yes, even the harsher words that come with the territory of discipline and daily exasperations, all in a language that is not merely foreign, but an adopted mother tongue, you too can have a multilingual family, and a fighting one at that.
losing a language

When you lose your language, you lose the sound, the rhythm, the forms of your unconscious.

Deep memories, resonances, sounds of childhood come through the mother tongue – when these are missing the brain cuts off connections.

Language communicates much more than literal meaning. It gives us timbre, tone, a rich undercurrent of resonances and shadings, multiple and ambiguous crosscurrents.

Do Media Help or Hinder Bilingualism?
Who doesn’t know Dora la Exploradora, Baby Einstein and the characters of Sesame Street?

Our kids love them, and many of us cannot imagine our multilingual lives without them. Yet, does supplementing our multilingual strategy with DVDs and TV programs really work? Are our kids really profiting from hearing Dora, Elmo and Bear in the Blue House on a daily basis?

In our last survey, we asked you to report on whether you think media (TV, DVDs, websites, computer programs) really help our children acquire a language or are a waste of time, or might even be damaging. As expected, your answers were varied, detailed and contradictory!

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded seem to think that yes, it does help. Many of us rely on media to strengthen a language in the household. But some of you are naysayers who state that the influence of media on language acquisition is overrated. And quite a few voices claim that yes, it does help, but only within limits. Below we quote some of your answers as well as tips on how to give your child a healthy experience with media.

Thank you to all parents who responded to this survey!

The only regular “support” I get for Hebrew comes from children’s DVDs I bring with me from Israel (with songs and stories) and it helps a lot! I’m just starting to introduce my eldest (4) to Hebrew interactive children’s websites.
— Tamar, Paris, France

As my daughter gets older I realize that I can’t teach her Spanish alone. One person alone can only do so much. Visual media learning tools allow our daughter the opportunity to gain exposure to the language when we’re not there.
— Carla, Warwick, RI, USA

I remember learning several Spanish words from Sesame Street when I was a child. I think learning “with” other kids (even fictional ones like Bert and Ernie or Grover) made it fun.
— Jill, Seattle, WA, USA
EXPERTS WEIGH IN...

Visual media can help children learn languages when used properly. DVDs, TV and computers are not replacements for daily, real life interaction with the language, but any exposure helps. Motivation is a key factor in language development, so if a child is motivated by visual media, then why not introduce them into the language learning process?

Television and movies can be particularly useful for language learners because they provide hours of valuable comprehensible input which will ultimately help to nourish the implicit language system and encourage fluency. I have seen children quote entire scenes from movies and television shows. I don’t think that there is any doubt that television has the potential to increase a child’s vocabulary, especially when it is combined with parent-child discussion about the film. Incorporating movies and television shows in the target language will help a child of any age to absorb more vocabulary, but the amount of screen time that should be allowed for children in any language is debatable. The AAP recommends no screen time at all for kids under two.

Computer games and Internet sites are more of a gray area. While I have seen some progress from students who spend time reading authentic material from web sites on topics of personal interest, I have seen very little progress from students who simply spend time doing grammar and language games on Internet sites. The game or website itself must be evaluated by the parent or instructor.

In my experience, visual media can be a valuable language learning tool for children who are motivated by them. However, they should only supplement a more comprehensive program that is characterized by plenty of real world language practice and parental interaction.

Starr Weems de Graffenried, Athens, Alabama USA, author of Teach Your Child Spanish Through Play, A Guide and Resource for Parents or Spanish for Kids, Games to Help Children Learn Spanish Language and Culture (Nomentira Publishing)

I don’t think visual media really helps to learn a language - it might wake curiosity about a language, but not more. I still think talking, reading and singing in a different language with a real person helps the most teaching a language. Visual media is not engaging enough to learn a language.

— Birgit, Seattle, WA, USA

Absolutely, positively yes!!! That is, as long as we’re talking about languages that the kids are learning anyhow. Given that I’m their only source of Danish most of the time, apart from weekly phone calls, I’m happy to have this help!

— Mai, The Hague, The Netherlands

Yes! I, as a 26 yr. old adult, proclaim the benefits of visual learning, since I too learned my second language by watching television soap operas!

— Geraldine, Ontario, Canada

Our children watch lots of German TV and it clearly improves both vocabulary and facility. Music is even more effective, internet less so, unless it’s associated with a TV show they watch.

— Erik, Redmond, WA, USA
I think visual media CAN help children learn languages, since it gives them visual context for the unfamiliar words. However the studies I am familiar with say it is best for children NOT to be exposed to a lot of “screen time,” especially the younger ones, and I also read recently a study that showed the Baby Einstein videos to be ineffective in promoting language development because the language was neither natural nor extensive. The person who conducted the research reported that children would learn more language from watching “American Idol” than “Baby Einstein.” So I think it is much more valuable for children to interact with people, and in this way will learn the most language, no matter what language it is.

— Kimberly, San Diego, California, USA

Visual media as you describe it puts the young child into some type of passive intellectual and emotional state. A child needs full human interaction to learn a language!

— Maïa, Providence, RI, USA

We juggle 4 languages daily and DVDs help in cementing the pronunciation of the minority languages, those who are spoken by only one parent. They provide another source for the child.

— Claudia, Paris, France

I am a big supporter of learning languages from people. I find the electronic teaching sites to be disjointed and lacking in all of the myriad of facial expressions and nuances one learns from a native speaker.

— Edwyna, Seattle, WA, USA

How many young children now know how to count to 10 in Spanish due to Dora, Diego & Big Bird?

Visual media, if used along with traditional learning, can be helpful - however, it shouldn’t be the sole source of learning - reading books, talking, sharing with parents, siblings, teachers is also (and if not more) important.

— Barbara, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada
... technology should not be a centerpiece as much as an accompaniment — something that serves as an object of joint attention. You should generally tune out technology if there are opportunities to talk and interact with your children directly. TV programs and DVDs can be quite useful and stimulating springboards for further interaction, but it is important to keep in mind that it is human interaction itself that is crucial for language development.

For babies and toddlers, we’ve seen that for non-native speakers, or parents with even minimal skills in a second language, a few forms of technology can be used to support your efforts to help your baby or toddler learn a language. Some activities include playing games with interactive toys, listening to music, and reading stories or interactive books together. These sorts of joint adult-child activities do much more to promote language learning, and other types of learning as well, than baby videos of any sort.

In contrast, for school-age children, you can feel comfortable about using all kinds of edutainment to support second language learning goals. Television programs, DVDs, Podcasts, language teaching software, video games, and even foreign-language music and music videos can provide positive and fun associations with the language for older children. They can help to link language meaningfully with the culture. And older children, especially those who can read English subtitles or who know a bit of the second language already, do seem to learn some language through these fun and enjoyable combinations of education and entertainment. They can be powerful additions to add to your language toolbox!


... technology should not be a centerpiece as much as an accompaniment — something that serves as an object of joint attention. You should generally tune out technology if there are opportunities to talk and interact with your children directly. TV programs and DVDs can be quite useful and stimulating springboards for further interaction, but it is important to keep in mind that it is human interaction itself that is crucial for language development.

For babies and toddlers, we’ve seen that for non-native speakers, or parents with even minimal skills in a second language, a few forms of technology can be used to support your efforts to help your baby or toddler learn a language. Some activities include playing games with interactive toys, listening to music, and reading stories or interactive books together. These sorts of joint adult-child activities do much more to promote language learning, and other types of learning as well, than baby videos of any sort.

In contrast, for school-age children, you can feel comfortable about using all kinds of edutainment to support second language learning goals. Television programs, DVDs, Podcasts, language teaching software, video games, and even foreign-language music and music videos can provide positive and fun associations with the language for older children. They can help to link language meaningfully with the culture. And older children, especially those who can read English subtitles or who know a bit of the second language already, do seem to learn some language through these fun and enjoyable combinations of education and entertainment. They can be powerful additions to add to your language toolbox!

Screen Time

Limiting time spent with TV, computers and the Internet

Many children and adults spend hours in front of a screen. They watch TV or videos, play games and use the computer. This can be fun and, in some cases, educational, but make sure it doesn’t take too much time from other activities or expose your child to harm.

Here are tips from Seattle Children’s Hospital for keeping screen time safe and sound.

SCREEN USE TIPS

• Limit entertainment screen time (TV, videos, games and Internet) to 1 to 2 hours per day. Use a kitchen timer to help keep track of time.
• Avoid TV for children under age 2. Choose activities that promote good brain growth, such as talking, playing, singing and reading.
• Involve your child in setting guidelines for choosing TV shows, games and computer activities. Use guides and ratings to help you, but beware of claims that a program is educational. Often times, there is no evidence to back such claims.
• Keep the TV off during meals.
• Set certain days as media-free, and plan other fun things to do. The books and Web sites in the original flyer (www.seattlechildrens.org/child_health_safety/pdf/flyers/Ce053.pdf) have lots of ideas.
• Avoid using the TV or other screen entertainment as a reward.
• Turn off the TV when a chosen program is over. Record shows to watch later, and skip the ads.
• Watching TV with your child. Talk about what you see and how problems can be solved without violence.
• Keep TVs and computers out of children’s bedrooms. Instead, keep them in a central place.
• Turn on the radio, music or books on tape instead of looking at a screen.
• Be a good role model and limit your own screen use.
• Teach children the purpose of advertising. Talk about unrealistic messages in ads.
• On newer TVs (since January 2000), use the Vchip to block out shows with sex and violence.

INTERNET SAFETY

The Internet can open up a world of fun and learning, but it also provides access to information and people children should avoid. Here are some tips for Internet use:

• Use a filter to block sites you don’t want your child to see. However, these aren’t foolproof—you still need to supervise.
• Explain that people they meet online are not always who they say they are. Tell your child that what they read may not be true and what they write may not be private.
• If you don’t know about computers or the Internet, ask your child to show you or go to the library and ask for help.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

• Children’s Resource Line (206) 987-2500 or (866) 987-2500 toll-free
  Washington, Alaska, Montana, Idaho
• Your Child’s Health Care Provider

Excerpted, with permission, from Seattle Children’s Hospital’s Screen Time flyer. We highly encourage you to read the informative two-page flyer at www.seattlechildrens.org/child_health_safety/pdf/flyers/Ce053.pdf.

TEACH CHILDREN TO

• Never use a credit card or give out personal information unless you say it’s OK. This includes: name, home address, phone number, age, race, family income, school name or address or friends’ names.
• Never share your password, even with friends.
• Never meet face-to-face with someone they “meet” online, unless a parent goes with them to a public place.
• Tell a parent or another adult if they get e-mails that make them feel uncomfortable. Never answer those e-mails.
• Never use bad language or send mean messages online.
• Never copy information and claim it’s their own, or copy software unless it is clearly marked “free.”
• Know what kinds of sites you allow and why. Make sites off-limits if they are obscene, pornographic, violent, hate-filled, racist or offensive in other ways.
Yunisrina Qismullah Yusuf is a lecturer at the Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia and is currently working on her Ph.D. thesis in phonology at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. She and her husband are parents of two quadrilingual daughters who speak Acehnese, Bahasa Indonesia, English and Bahasa Melayu. You can reach her at yunisrina@gmail.com

The author with her two quadrilingual daughters
My husband and I made the decision when our first daughter, Kaisah, was born. We were living in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. We thought, wouldn’t it be great if our children could speak all of the languages in which we are fluent? Acehnese (our mother tongue), Bahasa Indonesia (the national language of our country) and English (the language that I grew up with in the states for six years).

My parents had gone through all of the experiences in raising trilingual children, so we got them involved, too. We decided that my father, my sisters and I would speak English, my mother Acehnese and my husband Bahasa Indonesia to her. English was important, because we lived in a non-English speaking country; it is only used formally in schools and certain offices and events, therefore we had to get as many family members as possible to use that language. Wow, what a plan! Sounds easy, right?

It was effortless to be consistent with our languages when Kaisah was still babbling. Then, when “words” started coming out of her mouth, that was when the challenges began! When she was 1 and a half years old, it appeared that the three languages were considered as one to her. One word for one thing. “Don’t give up!” My parents said.

Then we left for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, so that my husband, Kaisah, and I could pursue our studies. A relative from Aceh stayed with us for 1 and a half years. I told her, “Please speak only Acehnese to Kaisah, even if she answers you in another language.” After she returned to Aceh, another relative, also from Aceh, stayed with us from then on and I asked for her help, too!

When Kaisah turned two, she started translating. For example, when I asked her, “What are you eating, Kaisah?” She answered, “Fish...eungkôt...” Wow! So I assumed that she was beginning to understand that there was another word for fish, but did she know that it was in another language? I consulted my parents. “Don’t worry! That’s normal!” They said.

When she was two and a half years old, Kaisah started to address us in the language that we spoke to her. She still mixed most of the time but she was beginning to understand that the language she was speaking was not just one. I remembered when I asked her to sit on my lap, “Kaisah, sit here.” Then my husband passed by and she reported to him, “Abah, Kaisah duduk!” (Daddy, Kaisah is sitting (down)!)

When Kaisah was three years old, she was still mixing all the languages in one sentence, for example, “Kaisah mau watch Barnie” (I want to watch Barnie) or “Umni ambil, hana trök” (Get it, Mommy, (I) cannot reach (it)). We tried to be persistent with our languages when talking to her, but sometimes she got us to mix them, too. It’s very contagious! Did my parents encounter problems like this? My goodness, how did they ever manage?! “Keep going! Just try your best!” They said.

When she was over three and a half years old, she still mixed all three languages in one sentence. I was a bit concerned because she was going to enter kindergarten soon. What would her teachers say when they heard her talk like that? I told my parents about my worries. “Remember, she is still growing! No pressure! Keep the languages fun!” They reminded.

Around four years old, Kaisah’s vocabulary was expanding. She could name many things in the three languages and she did not mix the words in one sentence that much anymore. Most of the time, she switched between sentences. Her grammar was not perfect but what an improvement! She would say, “Mau kemana kita, Umni? We are going to the zoo?” (Where are we going, Umni? Are we going to the zoo?). At the age of four and a half, Kaisah entered kindergarten and was officially introduced to Bahasa Melayu. In Malaysia, this is the official language and English is used commonly in Kuala Lumpur, but we never spoke Bahasa Malayu at home.

Kaisah is now almost six years old. She is still mixing and switching the languages, but not as much anymore, and she can differentiate them, too. She even told me once that she could speak and understand the four languages. Once she informed me, “Look Umni, they are speaking English” to an advertisement in English that was shown on TV. If she doesn’t know a word, she will even sometimes ask what it is in the four languages.

Kaisah’s sister, Syamim, is now two years old. We are also teaching her the three languages at home (four actually, as Kaisah is also introducing Bahasa Melayu to her). The journey starts again and there will be many problems ahead, but we try our best. My parents always remind us “Be patient and persistent! Never quit!”
My hand is inside a stuffed dragon puppet, while Julia, the eight-year-old I tutor in remedial reading, reviews her script and readies her princess puppet. Using the public library’s small puppet theatre, we’re going to perform a version of a children’s book that we’ve been working with for three weeks. I look around for kids I know to invite them to watch so that it feels like a real play with a real audience. A couple of kids are speaking Spanish; in the back of my mind I’m returning to my recent “Spanish for Librarians” course to figure out what they’re saying. Julia runs to get her mother, grandmother, and sisters, speaking Farsi because that’s the only way her grandmother will understand. And then I see a very familiar blond head investigating some nearby picture books: it’s my nephew, Carl!

We both get excited whenever we bump into each other at the library (which happens a couple of times a month, as I work in the children’s section). One of my favorite memories of Carl is the first time he spotted me there last year. His face lit up, he cried out “Tatie [auntie] comed to library!” I laughed; he said “Tatie is drôle [funny]!”, and he ran up and gave me a hug.

So now I run over to Carl, give him a bisou [kiss], and tell him—in French—that Julia and I are about to act out a great story with a dragon and a princess and that he should get his mom and come into the storytime room to watch.

And then I realize that he doesn’t understand a thing I’ve just said. The ideas of puppets, princesses, and plays have never come up during the time we spend together speaking exclusively in French!

Meanwhile, Julia’s tugging at me to tell me she wants to start, I’m still trying to decipher the Spanish conversation, I overhear the Farsi from the storytime room, and my mind is racing to find a way to explain the play in gestures and simple French to Carl while relaying the invitation to my sister-in-law in English.

“D’accord, on y va [okay, let’s go]!” I tell Julia. “We’re going to act out this story...” I begin to enthuse to Carl—until it occurs to me that I’m speaking the wrong language to each kid. Carl stares at me. He knows that Tatie speaks English, but never to him! And I tell myself that I might as well go say “hola” to the Afghani grandmother so that we’re all equally confused.

Multiple languages are swirling around in my brain and weaving a polylingual backdrop to my thoughts while I attempt to accomplish several things simultaneously, and as a result, nothing comes out right anymore! Yes, I can attribute some of that to the persistent sleep deprivation that comes from being the maman of a six-month-old. It suddenly hits home that if I’m really going to speak only French to Carl and my son Griffin, it will take mental acrobatics when we’re out in public and around non-francophones. This is going to be harder than I thought. And I’ve been thinking about it for two and a half years already.
October is “Celebrating the Bilingual Child Month.” This is a great time to enjoy reading bilingual books together as a family while encouraging language learning. These books will surely make your child smile! Double the fun by reading them in English AND in a second language. For more information go to www.languagelizard.com.

**Lima’s Red Hot Chilli**

Poor Lima! When she comes home from school, she’s hungry. Her mother tells her to help herself to anything in the kitchen... just NOT the red hot chilli. But Lima does not want the spaghetti or the samosas or the coconut. The only thing that really appeals to her is the beautiful Red, Hot CHILLI! Now who can help her find a cure? Children love watching Lima’s family try to come to her rescue while she enjoys one treat after another. This book is available in English with translations in Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Panjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese and Yoruba. Go to: www.languagelizard.com.

**Walking Through the Jungle**

A favorite book that takes young children through different terrains with vivid, colorful illustrations by bestselling illustrator Debbie Harter. Children see the jungle, the ocean, the mountains, the river, the desert and more. And on each page they see and “hear” the animals that live there. A true adventure! This book is available in English with translations in Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Czech, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Italian, Panjabi, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese. Go to www.languagelizard.com.

**Handa’s Surprise**

Handa wants to surprise her friend Akeyo. She puts 7 delicious fruits in a basket and starts walking to Akeyo’s village, but on her way she passes animals who all help themselves to some of the delicious fruit. Children will delight in the ‘surprise’ gift Handa brings to Akeyo. They will also enjoy her journey through a beautiful African landscape, where they are introduced to a wide variety of fruits and animals. This book is available in English with translations in Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Farsi, French, Gujarati, Panjabi, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Twi, Urdu and Yoruba. Go to www.languagelizard.com.
An immigrant is a person living in a country that is not their own, often separated from the core family and in a culture with which they are not familiar. They include diplomats, officials working for international organizations, multinational corporations and international banks, religious groups, aid workers, etc., who probably do not realize that they are immigrants in the same way as asylum seekers, economic migrants escaping poverty in search of a better life or refugees fleeing from civil strife. Nevertheless, all are thrown **nolens volens** into a different culture, social class, local traditions, language and discourse strategies, etc.

There are, of course, translation and interpretation services available to recently arrived minority ethnic groups in most host countries. However, it is more important to provide incentives for language learning for immigrants to accelerate their integration and thus decrease the sense of insecurity and alienation often felt initially, apart from the obvious benefits of bilingualism.

The language barrier exacerbates intercultural misunderstandings. Those seeking work are at a disadvantage due to subjective factors such as employers fearing migrants are unable to learn a trade because of language deficiencies. Language issues are highly political. Some governments are quick to embrace emigration as a panacea for unemployment and underemployment in their own countries and governments in the receiving countries propagate pessimistic prognosis regarding integration. Certain working environments can interfere with migrants’ cross-cultural adaptation. In workplaces where the majority of employees are from the same linguistic background, which is other than the host language, there is the danger of apathy setting in and it is therefore essential to encourage immigrants to take advantage of whatever language tuition is available not only to facilitate integration but to aspire to self-improvement.

The general tendency is to acknowledge that most groups are here to stay and government policies have to
be oriented towards funding the teaching of the language of the country of adoption. The British Advisory Board on Naturalisation and Integration stated that some of the pressure for English language classes could be alleviated by employers taking responsibility for the language needs of migrant workers. As for their children, it is estimated that a high percentage speak languages at home other than that of their country of adoption which increases the burden on schools to provide an adequate standard of linguistic education. In Britain recent figures showed that nearly 15% of children in State schools come from non-English-speaking homes and within inner London this rises to nearly 54% of all pupils.

The goal is for immigrants to become “anonymous”. For example, many Turks in Germany have, by the way of upward mobility, lost their “visibility” as poor workers to become “invisible” – thus not immediately recognized as foreigners – but as professionals (doctors, engineers, etc.). Most integration factors reinforce each other: a better job is associated with more advanced language skills, this followed by a higher salary enabling the immigrant to move to live outside the original migrant sphere, thus entering into wider social contact with the host population. This visible-invisible situation can be compared to the attitude in the United States where the media often concentrates on crimes committed by ethnic minorities instead of acknowledging the substantial number of middle/upper class immigrants, often subsequently university educated, who are now integrated into the North American society at a high level.

A pluralistic approach is necessary for minorities to feel at home in their new country. Apart from the responsibility of governments and education authorities, the onus also lies with the individual migrant families. Of course they should not lose sight of their own cultural identity and cross-cultural exchanges should be promoted to foster mutual understanding between immigrants and the host population. This is where linguistic knowledge is paramount. At the same time, parents from strict socio-cultural backgrounds must be ready to adapt to their new situation and not influence their children who, through the host country education system, will learn the language quicker and wish to integrate into the local society. The lack of family support risks alienating the children in two ways – either from the core family itself, or if feeling marginalised, they can easily be exposed to radical influences prejudicial to their adopted country. This also applies to children born in the new country and who, in spite of following the country’s education system, are hindered by the older generations’ conservative attitude.

In conclusion, the anthropological meaning of “cultures” refers to the different ways of living, thinking and creating and immigration can be the backbone to enable furthering the dialogue between peoples of our global village. Immigrants have the opportunity to forge a new identity in which language is one of the cornerstones of interpenetration of different cultures through racial mingling and thus contributing to a more peaceful world. Fusion is effected when a new identity has been created, or as the French phrase it: “S’il n’a pas d’arrachement, il n’y a pas l’attachement!”

"However, it is more important to provide incentives for language learning for immigrants to accelerate their integration and thus decrease the sense of insecurity and alienation often felt initially, apart from the obvious benefits of bi-multilingualism."

Bettina Ribes Gil is a retired international official and a freelance TEFLA certified teacher with experience in Switzerland and Spain. She is now concentrating on writing more than teaching.
Ask An Expert...

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY MADALENA CRUZ-FERREIRA

Have a question for our experts?
Send it to: editor@multilingualliving.com.

Question: Although I’m Brazilian, I am trying to raise my seven month old baby as a bilingual child. I speak in English with him while my husband and all the country, of course, speak in Portuguese. But I’m finding myself in real big trouble because the person who helped me with my experiment has moved to an other country, and now I’m afraid of not being able to continue alone. I study English a lot but I’d like to receive your advice about what I should do, either keep studying to teach my son “good English” or give up? If I find someone else soon to help me, do you think my son will speak English even though there is so much Portuguese language around him?

Answer: Let me start by saying that it is quite possible to raise a child bilingually by having one parent use a non-native language to the child. Although in the case you describe in your question, I would like to call your attention to a number of things.

First, you will need to ask yourself exactly why do you want to raise your child bilingually. Bilingualism is not an addition to everyday life, it is a necessity of everyday life. The stress here is on the words “necessity” and “everyday”. People become bilingual because they have to, in order to function adequately in bilingual contexts.

Second, bilingualism is certainly not an “experiment”, to use your word, that one carries out for its own sake. Your child needs you as a parent, not as a language teacher. So ask yourself also in which language do you want to nurture your child as a parent.

Third, bilingualism is a long-term commitment and your child will grow up. Ask yourself in which language you feel comfortable now, rocking him to sleep, soothing him, playing with him, feeding him, and later, discussing and telling him about the world, and listening to him tell you about his world. English may not be a good choice, if you feel, as you say, that you need to study the language in order to use it with your child. Language use in the intimacy of your home is something that comes naturally, not something you need to spend time and effort perfecting. If you choose to use Portuguese with your child and you wonder whether he will learn English in future, please don’t worry. He will learn English, or any other language that he needs to learn, when he needs to learn it. Perhaps in a playgroup later on, to have fun with English-speaking children? That’s what bilingualism is all about: using different languages in a natural way for different purposes.

I hope this helps, feel free to come back to me any time!

Madalena Cruz-Ferreira is a multilingual parent, educator and linguist. She is Portuguese and she received postgraduate degrees in linguistics from the University of Manchester, UK. She is the author of Three is a crowd? Acquiring Portuguese in a trilingual environment (2006) Clevedon, Multilingual Matters (www.multilinguallmatters.com). 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.

Website: linguistlist.org/people/personal/index.html
Email: mcf636@hotmail.com
Raising a Bilingual Child: A step-by-step guide for parents by Barbara Zurer Pearson, is a comprehensive and versatile handbook with depth and zest.

Whether it is a reference book that you seek, or a bag of practical tips and tricks to put to immediate action, or comprehensive information on theory and research, this book covers it all. As a guidebook for parents it presents the nuts and bolts of raising a child in two or more languages. Yet in its holistic approach towards bilingualism this book is more than a manual. It goes well beyond general background information and addresses issues of universal bilingualism, bilingual identity, school matters, research controversies and much more.

This book has one of the best summaries and discussions on bilingual research I have come across so far, and it is worthwhile picking up this book for this reason alone. We parents often don’t have time to wade through pages and pages of scientific studies on bilingualism, which are usually written in inaccessible academic language. Often we fail to decode the significance of a given study and how it relates to the development of our children. What Raising a Bilingual Child does so successfully is to explain in down-to-earth language why these studies are relevant to us and how they play out in our every-day lives. This leads to many exciting “A-ha” reading experiences.

The author herself has studied and worked with many bilingual families, notably with the University of Miami Bilingualism Study Group, whose testimonials form the groundwork of this book. Of particular interest, therefore, is a chapter on “How-to Testimonials” in which 36 families are presented. We get to peek into the households of these families and learn how they do it. From the accidental bilingual to the non-native speaker, the bicultural couple to the single mother, the relocated family to the adopted child, the case studies presented cover such a wide, flexible range, the chances are that you will find your situation reflected in one of theirs.

The book is informative, supportive, comforting and inspirational – and highly recommendable! Grounded in scientific research and backed up with case studies, you get everything served on a silver platter. If you are going to read only one book on multilingualism, we suggest that you let this be the one!
**Refrigerator Talk**

Use your refrigerator (wall, chalk board, white board, or window) to get your kids interested in language and culture! No, this isn’t about food, it is about using your refrigerator as a place to post funny language items. Each day (or once a week) come up with a language activity and post it. For example, print out a sentence which your kids have to try and translate. It can have vocabulary words which you don’t think your children know. Or maybe it is a sentence in your dialect? Another idea is to have instructions for something your kids can do (feed the dog, let out the cat, call grandma) or something your kids can receive (a snack, a piece of cake, chips).

A fun activity for your multilingual family is to print out a sentence from another language (one your kids don’t know) and post it on your refrigerator. Ask your kids to guess what language it is and to see if they can translate it. If it is in a different script, then it will most likely just be silly and fun (but that is the whole point). To take it one step further, have your kids identify from which country the language is from and some details about the country, such as, where it is located, some unique foods and any other cultural idiosyncrasies. At dinner time have your kids share their translations as well as the information they found. Or, if there isn’t enough time for your kids to research it ahead of time, sit together as a family and figure it out!

**Super-scramble**

Who doesn’t like a game of figuring out scrambled words? Forget about waiting around for activity books from back home and make your own word scrambles! Start by figuring out age-appropriate words. For younger children, keep the words to 3-4 letters. It may be hard enough for them to figure out how to play the game, so don’t make it too hard to start. Also remember to use words that your child knows well! If your child doesn’t know what the word “cat” means then making a scramble game with it won’t be any fun for either of you. For older kids, you may have to play the game a bit to find out where their comfort level is. Start with easier words and work your way up.

You can present the words by themselves or you can give clues or even a picture. If you are really into creating some scramble books for your kids, find some free thumbnail photos of the words you are going to scramble and include them next to the scrambled words. Or you can have your child draw a picture of the word once it is unscrambled.

**Missing Letter(s)**

Grab a pencil and a piece of paper and you are ready to prepare this activity. Of course, if you are more computer savvy and want to take the time, do it on the computer and print it out. Basically, you first need to come up with pairs of words which differ by only one letter. You can choose words that differ by a vowel (cat vs cut) and/or by a consonant (cat vs mat). You can either draw boxes for each letter of the word, fill in all of the boxes other than the one letter that differs between the two, or you can just write out the words and have an empty line where the letters differ.

For younger kids, keep the words simple. A younger child may not understand the concept of vowels so don’t bother explaining such differences if he is not interested. Just have fun with it.

For older kids, start off with more simple words and gradually make them more difficult. You can also make more letters missing from the words, or even give clues for the different words (like a crossword puzzle). Once your older child has got the hang of it, have him come up with sets of words for you! Give him a heads up for this ahead of time (maybe even with a dictionary in hand or a website which lists rhyming words) so that he can be proud of the list he was able to come up with.
Parts of the body

Body parts are fun when it is all about us! In this activity it is best if you can get a hold of some large pieces of paper, ones that are as large as your child. But if you can’t, standard size will work as well. If you have paper the size of your child, then do a tracing of her whole body. Make sure to get fingers and toes and ears and belly button, even though it means adding them in after your child stands up after the tracing. If you don’t have a large piece of paper, then use standard-size pieces of paper and trace hands on one, feet on another.

Once the tracings are done, then draw lines to different parts of the tracing. For example, hand, fingers, finger nails, etc. Then write in the names of the different parts of the body at the end of each line. Include both the singular and the plural. For the full-body tracing, make sure to have enough space to write in all of the names of the body parts!

To have even more fun, have your child color in the tracings! Let him draw in eyes and fingernails, hair and even clothes. Once the tracing is all colored in and has all of the body parts written out, find a good spot in your house where you can pin up the tracing. Visit it often and have your child point to the body parts and then the word that refers to it. Have your child identify the first letter of each body part or for more advanced, have them read out the words.

Crazy Sentences!

Grammar can be one of the most frustrating and difficult things for kids to understand, no matter the language. Here is your chance to give your child a head start on this topic while also having some fabulous fun! Come up with some fairly easy sentences. For example, “The boy gave the book to the girl.” Then mix everything up and have your child help you put it right again. For example, “[The book][gave][to the girl][the boy].” Depending on your language, there may be multiple correct outcomes so keep an open mind. Anything that sounds right should be considered correct. For younger children, don’t get into the grammar terminology. Just have fun with sentence structure. For older kids, introduce some basic grammar terms, like noun, verb, adjective, direct object, etc. Your child can even color code each word once she has put the sentences into correct order (nouns are blue, direct objects are red, etc.). Remember, have fun, fun, fun and your child will love grammar!

Searching for the words

Word searches are always fun for both young and old—and they are so easy to make yourself at home! All you need is a piece of standard size paper and a pen or pencil, or try creating this on your computer. Start by coming up with a list of words. The words can all be part of a set, such as, fruit, cities, activities, or just a bunch of words that you would like your child to learn how to read and spell.

Start by drawing lines horizontally and vertically on a piece of paper to create squares in which you can write letters. Write your words into the boxes on the paper. Try to spread the words out so that they will be found across the page. Once you have written in the search words, fill the rest of the squares on the paper with random letters. In the end, the page should be full of what looks like random letters. Remember, if your language uses capital letters for some words, you will want to either have all of the letters in capital or all of them in lowercase, otherwise it will be obvious where certain initial letters appear.

The difficulty of the words and the number of letters on the page depends on the age of your children. For young children, a page with tons of letters can appear daunting! For older kids it may be just the challenge they are looking for. And make sure to show your child how to go about finding the words: start at the top of the page and go back and forth along each line of letters searching for the initial letter of the target word. Once that letter is found, look at each surrounding letter to find out if it is there. If so, then move on to the next letter. If not, then continue along each line of letters. Ah, what fun!
Because Global Communication Begins At Home

Visiting today! www.biculturalfamily.org

ONE YEAR subscription to Multilingual Living Magazine

Fill out this form and send to the address below with a check or money order!
Or go to www.biculturalfamily.org/subscriptions.html and pay with credit card.

Only $12

Name: ________________________________

Email Address: __________________________

Send your check or money order for $12 to:
Bilingual/Bicultural Family Network
P.O. Box 51172
Seattle, WA 98115
USA
Baked Apples

It is that time of year for piping hot apples, filling the house with an autumn warmth and glow.

Ingredients:

4 large apples
1/4 cup brown sugar (white sugar, honey, maple syrup, etc. can be substituted - but make sure to adjust amount based on sweetness)
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup chopped pecans (these are optional; a different type of chopped nuts can be substituted if desired).
1/4 cup chopped currants or raisins
1 Tablespoon butter
3/4 cup boiling water (hot cider can be substituted)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Wash apples. Remove cores to 1/2 inch of the bottom of the apples. It helps if you have an apple corer, but if not, you can use a paring knife to cut out first the stem area, and then the core. Use a spoon to dig out the seeds. Make the holes about 3/4-inch to an inch wide. Make a few shallow cuts along the sides of the apples through the skin (so they won’t explode in the oven).
2. In a small bowl, combine the sugar, cinnamon, currants/raisins, and pecans. Place apples in a 8-inch-by-8-inch square baking pan. Stuff each apple **tightly** with this mixture. Top with a dot of butter (1/4 of the Tablespoon for each apple).
3. Add boiling water to the baking pan. Bake 30-60 minutes, basting with the pan juices, until tender, but not mushy. (Note: firmer apples will need more cooking time, softer apples will cook much more quickly). Remove from the oven and baste the apples several times again with the pan juices.

Serving suggestion: serve apples warm with vanilla ice cream on the side.

Makes 4 servings.
Kleine Grosse Welt
German books for growing minds

Families are always on the lookout for books to help get discussions going with their children in their language. Michaela Houston, a native of Germany and an experienced teacher, has put together a set of fun and educational books in German which your children can not help but enjoy - mine sure did!

Ich sehe was, was du nicht siehst - Allerlei is aimed at children ages 3 and up. Each page has two clues with flip-open doors which reveal answers underneath. The clues are comprehensive and encourage children to listen and engage. Younger children will enjoy the anticipation of trying to figure out what the item is hidden under each door while older children will be encouraged to keep their vocabulary sharp to understand each clue!

Punkt, Punkt, Komma, Strich... Ein fröhliches Arbeitsbuch, a language exercise book intended for children in 1st grade and older, is filled with limitless language opportunities! Each page is dedicated to a letter of the alphabet. Below that, the pages are full of a variety of activities from fill-in-the-blank, finishing the sentence, unscrambling letters, reading words out loud, and more. Parents and teachers alike are highly encouraged to incorporate these books into their German language learning programs. At the very least, Michaela's ideas will get you inspire to create your own!

For more information go to: www.kleinegrossewelt.com

Galloping Minds
English and Spanish resources for children

Looking for a DVD to get the Spanish language started with your preschooler? Then check out Galloping Minds’ Preschooler Learns Spanish DVD! Children, foods, animals, colors and more are included in this DVD to teach children their first Spanish words. Each scene includes spoken and written words in both English and Spanish, as well as enough repetition to help children hear, understand and, ultimately, start repeating. A benefit of this DVD for younger children is that it is slow enough that they are able to follow the movement of the DVD without lacking in interesting graphics and images (something my 3 year old really appreciated!).

The makers of Preschooler Learns Spanish understand what interests children and have made sure to include a wide array of colors, cartoons, and cheerful children to make language learning fun. My 3 year old was captivated! Your children won’t become fluent Spanish speakers from watching Preschooler Learns Spanish but they are going to enjoy learning a bunch of new words and the groundwork for Spanish-speaking will have been set!

Galloping Minds also produces Alphabet and Phonics Flash Cards. Unfortunately, they don’t have any in Spanish yet. But the ones they have in English are top quality! Each card focuses on a letter of the alphabet or phonics and includes many examples for children to read out loud or repeat after you. For families out there looking for English resources, we’d recommend that you add these sturdy, colorful and educational flash cards to your set of materials.

For more information go to: www.gallopingminds.com
There are those moments when you come across language learning DVDs which amaze you with their balance of educational value and enjoyment. Language Tree's DVDs fit snugly into this category! As luck would have it, we received six Language Tree DVDs to review just before heading out on a three-day road trip from Seattle, Washington to San Francisco, California. With a portable DVD player on hand, my children (ages 3, 5 and 7) watched every single DVD multiple times along our three-day driving route. By the time we arrived in San Francisco, they were each teaching my husband and me random words in four different languages plus sign language!

To my great surprise and delight, each DVD is replete with a cast of native-speaking characters. Language Tree doesn't compromise quality by trying to get away with using the same characters in each DVD. And attention is even given to cultural nuances!

We received two beginner level 1, Volume 1 DVDs: *Italian for Kids* and *Spanish for Kids*. The storyline is similar in both (the main character is turning ten and has a birthday party) and each starts off with a cheerful song to get things going. The DVDs then jump right into language immersion as the main characters wake up in the morning and greet their pet dogs. In the Spanish version of the DVD, a man named Andre narrates in English between episodes and helps to keep the viewer motivated. And for those who want to read the dialogue, a companion booklet is provided with which contains sentences in both English and the target language.

The *French for Kids* and *Chinese for Kids* DVDs which we received were each Beginner Level 1, Volume 2. The format in these second-level DVDs is similar to those of the Volume 1 series but, as expected, are more advanced. The grammar and vocabulary are more challenging and provide the viewer with even more opportunities for language learning. As with the Italian and Spanish DVDs, *French for Kids* and *Chinese for Kids* employ language immersion and native-speaking casts.

An ingenious feature to these DVDs is the inclusion of language quizzes which can be answered via the DVD remote control! At first I was concerned that my children might lose interest during these quizzes since the answers demand vocabulary and sentence retention. But to my surprise and delight, my children had fabulous fun answering the questions! I even found my husband battling it out with the kids during a French quiz.

While we believe that the Chinese, French, Italian and Spanish DVDs would most likely be of interest to children in kindergarten and up, the sign language DVDs *Happy Signs Day* and *Happy Signs Night* would most likely appeal to children even younger and up. Lively and colorful animated animals help to teach signs to babies and toddlers in these DVDs with enough repetition to ensure that young viewers will be able to master the signs themselves.

We highly recommend these DVDs! And as with all media, we recommend that parents join their children in viewing them, primarily so that parents can use the rich vocabulary and signs with their children in everyday contexts. Happy language learning fun!

For more information go to: [www.language-tree.com](http://www.language-tree.com)
INTERNET AND BILINGUALISM

“A recent major impact on languages in the world has been the use of the Internet (World Wide Web). While there is much use of the Internet in English, other languages have grown in recent years. There is not information and exchange in many of the world’s languages.”

“Non-English speakers have been the fastest growing group of new Internet users, many using the Internet bilingually or multilingually. Even where there are relatively high levels of English literacy, users typically indicate a preference for websites in their mother tongue.

When children use the Internet, language proficiency can be enhanced. Through the Internet, authentic language practice is possible via, for example, the use of electronic mail. There may be increased motivation to use a language via contact with children in other countries and which allows access to authentic language texts (see Glossary of book).

“By its nature, the Internet brings people speaking both the same (and different) languages into closer contact. By exchanging information with children in other countries, children can build increasing independence in language use, vary their language according to audience, and use language for real purposes. Children can take part in conversations and conferences over the Internet with native speakers, using not only written text but increasingly phone, video and audio conferencing as well. Exchange visits can be reinforced with preparatory and follow-up Internet links, and there are the possibilities of ‘virtual exchanges’ and ‘telepresence’.”


TELEVISION WATCHING AND LANGUAGE

“When there is insufficient exposure to one language, the use of DVDs, videos and television programs may be a helpful supplement to a child’s language diet. Minority language parents often buy language minority resources to encourage their children to grow in that language. They feel it important that the minority language and not just the majority language is identified with high status mass media images. Another example is when French speakers in English-speaking areas buy in French language recordings or obtain French television channels by satellite. Not only does a child receive language experience by such enjoyable and captivating means, the language itself may be raised in status in the child’s eyes by being attached to this important modern image.

There are limits to parental power concerning television choice. Children at a very early age become adept at turning to the channel of their (and not their parent’s) choice. Watching a favorite cartoon becomes more important than the attempted language engineering of the parent. This occasionally works to the advantage of bilingualism. Watching Mickey Mouse or Bugs Bunny is important, watching it in German, French, Japanese or English can become relatively unimportant to the child.”

“Since languages are typically not mixed on television, there seems an advantage for children to watch television in either of their languages. Watching one program in German and the next in French seems to be valuable since these are separate language experiences.

However, the value of television in children’s language development should not be exaggerated. While it may help to a limited extent in extending the language versatility of the child, television is essentially a passive medium. A child does not practice or use their language with a television set—or only in rare situations. The child is the recipient of language rather than the producer of language. A child’s listening vocabulary may be extended, but television does not usually produce direct opportunities to extend speaking performance.”