4 Fabulous Tips for parents of trilinguals

IS OPOI HARDER WITH THE SECOND CHILD?

Trilingualism?
Yes we can!

Go from three to four languages!

Language Experts what do they say?

BILINGUALISM by trial and error

Multilingualism is everywhere - really!

Multilingual Living
Because Global Communication Begins At Home
www.biculturalfamily.org

Magazine
Winter 2009
Volume 4, Number 1

BILINGUALISM by trial and error

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CONGRATULATIONS to our September-October 2008 WINNER:
Marie N-F from Irvine, California, USA

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As the days grow shorter and the weather becomes cold and icy our lives tend to turn inward. We find solace in that which is familiar and comforting: family, friends, home and even our language(s) and culture(s), which we so often take for granted. It is so easy to forget the degree to which our words and habits offer us care and support. They are always there to embrace us with their intimacy and security, reminding us that they still belong to us completely and indefinitely.

These last few months have been especially difficult. My mother passed away in November after a two-year struggle with breast cancer. She had just barely turned 65 years old. What began with an anaphylactic shock to her chemotherapy treatment in October (which my brother and I witnessed as they resuscitated her back to life) culminated in her final breaths less than a month later. The cancer had finally won the battle and my mother was forced to let go.

We dedicate this issue of Multilingual Living Magazine to her. It was her incessant questioning and inquiring about my and my children’s bilingualism which started the ball rolling in 2002. It drove her crazy to hear me speaking a language other than English with my children, her grandchildren. It wasn’t that she was against non-English languages, it just didn’t feel right to her to hear me speaking one with her grandchildren. To add fuel to the fire, when my children started speaking their first words, they were in German. Words that my mother couldn’t even understand!

Although my mother’s reaction made me angry, frustrated and hurt, her reaction spurred me into searching for answers. I was motivated to find solutions to our situation. Thus, thanks to my mother, a website and a parent support group was born.

Now that my mother is gone, I find that things are easier in many ways. My children and I no longer have to switch to English when she is around. I no longer have to defend to her my choice to speak German to my children. Yet, what wouldn’t I give for those difficulties again! I always knew that she said the things she said and did the things she did because she loved me, my children and husband. I knew that she did what she did because she wanted to feel that she still belonged to us, was cared for by us and that we could always be counted on for love and comfort. Language was simply an integral part to that for her (as it is for all of us).

Now that my mother is gone, I truly realize how important it is to have people question our choices and motives. Without a challenge, we often fail to come to a conclusion and decide on a definitive plan. I didn’t even realize how valuable a plan can be when raising children in more than one language until my mother started asking me what our plans were! I had no idea how important the German language was to me until she asked me how I could possibly speak a non-native language with my own children! Had she never asked, had she just smiled and supported my every choice, perhaps I would not be as resolute in my decisions today and as comfortable in my ability to question them when they aren’t working.

During these months of slowing down, getting centered again and even hibernating a bit, let us not forget that what is most important in our lives are those we love. Language is a means to an end. It is not only a way to identify who we are but, more importantly, a way to connect with others, a way to understand the innermost thoughts and hopes of those we love. So, before you do anything today, give your loved ones hugs and tell them that you love them in whatever language you choose.

Corey (& Alice too)
We'd like to dedicate this issue of Multilingual Living Magazine to a dear contributor, mother and grandmother: **Sharon Kathleen Spellman**, mother to our Editor-in-Chief, Corey Heller.

Sharon passed away in her home on November 16th, 2008 from breast cancer. She was 65 years old. Corey was by her mother’s side holding her hand, telling her she could go “home” whenever she was ready as she took her last breaths.

We thank Sharon for her dedication to the Bilingual/Bicultural Family Network and Multilingual Living Magazine. Had it not been for Sharon’s wise, probing inquiries of her daughter about bilingualism, neither the web site nor the magazine would be here for us to enjoy today.

We at Multilingual Living Magazine thank Sharon for all of her support, contributions, joy and inspiration. To read her contributions, check out her column “Between Grandparent and Grandchild” in the back issues of Multilingual Living Magazine at [www.biculturalfamily.org/backissues.html](http://www.biculturalfamily.org/backissues.html).

*Sharon holding her first born grandchild, Patrick Gerhard Heller.*
As mum to a tri-lingual boy of 2, I’ve been a fan of the Bilingual Babies website for some time. I’ve just discovered your site and would like to add our non profit making playgroup to the list. It’s in Sitges, Barcelona, Spain and it’s called Sitges Playgroup. Here is the link: www.sitgesplaygroup.com

Sitges Playgroup is the only place in Sitges where you can “stay and play” with your child in a safe and stimulating environment. The Stiges Playgroup is an international members-only group. We currently have around 40 members representing (over the years) some 25 countries! The language of the Stiges Playgroup is English but the majority of members speak Spanish too. We are a non-profit making organisation run purely by volunteers: the mums and dads that you will meet!

I’d also welcome any advice about starting structured language activities eg: storytime. I envisage the children (0-3/4yrs old) sitting and listening to a story read one week in English and the next week in Spanish then doing some related activities - pictures, drama etc.

Thanks in advance
Claire Bodgers


I wanted to say that you are doing a wonderful job with the magazine, I read each issue cover to cover. I find the magazine very useful as a parent of Liana, 1 year and 5 months old bilingual in Slovak and English, but also as a postgraduate student. I am doing a study on bilingual language acquisition, with my daughter Liana being the very center of my research.

I find all the information in your magazine very relevant as a parent as well as to my study, since you always include

From You To Us!

PHOTO: © Stockphoto.com/bulent_ince

I am a doctoral student in Bilingual Education at New York University and the mother of a young multilingual child. As every multilingual parent, I am concerned about my child’s language development and hope that she will reach high levels of speaking and understanding in all her languages, but I know that unfortunately this is not always the case.

This concern led me to the topic of my dissertation research entitled “Home Language Use in Children Raised in Multilingual Homes.” In this study, I am interested in finding out the reasons why some children speak their parents’ native languages fluently, while others only understand them, which could ultimately make a difference in the children’s overall academic success.

The only requirements for participation is that your family has decided to raise your children in more than one language and that at least one of your children is between 3 and 5 years old.

If you would like to participate, I would like to ask you to fill out an online questionnaire that takes 30-45 minutes. If you decide to volunteer for an interview, I would also like to ask you to participate in an interview to discuss your personal experience raising bilingual children.

If you are interested in participating, please email me at: ssg273@nyu.edu for more information.

Thank you, Severine Grimaud Patanakul

Multilingual Families Needed!
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.

I am the author of a children’s book for and about multilingual and multicultural children. It is a wonderful book! The illustrations are so great, the book is educational, emotional and inspiring. You can read more about it and see some of the illustrations here www.jayjayandtotte.com.

I would love to spread the word to the multicultural community via your magazine. Kindly, Michelle

Michelle Cadeau
Mamma & Grundare
Har du pratat svenska med ditt barn i dag?
Svenska Mamnor
www.svenskamamnor.com

I recently started a blog chronicling our family’s journey raising our two children bilingually in Mandarin and English. The blog will include some personal anecdotes but will primarily focus on compiling resources and information for parents that my husband and I have found useful. An introductory message is here: haomama.us/2009/01/02/hello-world/ and the homepage is here: haomama.us/

I hope you will be able to include it on the Bilingual/Bicultural Family network site.

Many thanks!
Sophie Beach

Lingo (www.lingo.org.au) is the web face of the Languages Action Alliance. Bilingual Families Perth has been involved in setting up this new Australian network which aims to:

* Motivate and empower parents from all backgrounds to make informed decisions and take initiatives to support the development of bilingual skills for their children

* Connect parents, educators, teachers, community

groups and language organisations for the purpose of promoting and supporting language teaching and learning

* Raise the Australian public’s awareness about the benefits of multilingualism

* Raise government bodies’ awareness of what parents want in terms of support and services for language learning

* Deliver the message that as individuals and as community we can make a difference.

The initial focus is on parents of very young children, reflecting international research about the long term benefits and dividends of raising children in a language-rich environment from the very early years. Log on to www.lingo.org.au and check out their blog.

Irma Lachmund
Chairperson and Hon. Coordinator
Phone 042 042 1352,
www.geocities.com/bilingualfamilies

We have attached a photo of Liana at 9 months, ‘learning about bilingualism’.

Regards,
Margareta
Die besten Kinderklassiker

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

Wort für Wort

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

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

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

Mein Quiz-O-Fant

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

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

**Felix bei den Kindern der Welt**

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

**Kinder brauchen Träume**

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

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Did you know...

... that 70% of the Dutch population speaks three languages?

... that on average, the world loses one language every two weeks?

... that the US state of Oklahoma boasts the highest density of indigenous languages in the United States?

... that the United Nations uses six official languages in its intergovernmental meetings and documents: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish; the Secretariat uses two working languages: English and French?

... that Chinese has several prominent dialects and two different writing systems?

... that cats have over one hundred vocal sounds, while dogs only have about ten?

... that the most difficult language to speak is Basque? It is not related to any language in the world. It is spoken in north-western Spain and south-western France?

... that Somalia is the only country in the world where almost every citizen speaks only one language, Somali?

... that by the time a child is 5 years old, he/she will on average have spent 9,100 hours learning his/her native language?

... that 95% of the world’s population living today learn one of about 100 languages as a first language, leaving the remaining 6,700 languages spoken by 5% of the population?

**Winter Mythology**

In [Greek mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter), Hades kidnapped Persephone to be his wife. Zeus ordered Hades to return her to her mother Demeter, the goddess of the Earth. However, Hades had tricked Persephone into eating the food of the dead, so Zeus decreed that Persephone would have to spend six months with Demeter and six months with Hades each year. During the time of year that her daughter is with Hades, Demeter becomes depressed and through her sorrow causes winter to occur.

In [Welsh mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Persephone_Hades_BM_Vase_E82.jpg), Gwyn ap Nudd abducted a maiden named Creiddylad. On May Day, her lover, Gwythr ap Greidawl, fought Gwyn to win her back. The battle between them represents the contest between summer and winter.

Multilingual Murder!

Edward Rulloff was a 19th century philologist who could speak 28 languages and dialects. However, Rulloff also had a dark side. During his lifetime, he was accused of a string of burglaries and robberies, as well as several murders. These included the reported poisoning of his sister-in-law and niece, and the beating deaths of his wife and daughter. He tried to delay his execution by arguing that it would prevent him from finishing his book on the nature of language, a plea which was ignored. His brain is the second-largest on record and is on display in the Psychology Building at Cornell University.

“Our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children’s future. And we are all mortal.”
— John F. Kennedy (in 1963)

Multilingual Musings

Cultural Kisses

North America: Cheek kissing between adults, when it occurs at all, is most often done between a man and woman who know each other well, such as between relatives or close friends.

Latin America: In Latin America, cheek kissing is a universal form of greeting between a man and a woman or two women. It is not necessary to know a person well or be intimate with them to kiss them on the cheek.

Southeast Asia: Cheek kissing is extremely uncommon in South East Asia, especially in countries with predominantly Muslim or Hindu cultures.

Middle East: Cheek kissing between a male and female is usually considered inappropriate, unless within the same family, e.g. brother and sister. Some exceptions to this are Lebanon, Egypt, and some of the more liberal Arab countries, where cheek kissing is a common greeting between unrelated males and females in most communities.

Rarest language of them all

One of the world’s rarest languages is Putijarra, spoken in Western Australia’s desert Pilbara region. In 2004 it was reported that just four Aboriginal elders, living in the inland communities of Jigalong, Yandeyarra and Newman, still spoke Putijarra. Luckily, the Wangka Maya Aboriginal Language Centre have been able to record and document Putijarra before it disappears completely. This is but one of 25 endangered languages in Australia which the group has been able to preserve. Info: acl.arts.usyd.edu.au/projects/wangkamaya

The planet Mars

The planet Mars was named by the Romans for their god of war, Mars, because of the planet’s red, bloodlike color. The satellites around the planet Mars are also appropriately named. One is Phobos (named for one of the horses that drew Mars’ chariot) and the other is Deimos (named for one of Mars’ companions).

Esperanto

Esperanto is an artificial language devised by a Polish eye doctor, L. L. Zamenhof, and was introduced in 1887. The name comes from his pen name, Dr. Esperanto, which in the language means “one who hopes.” Based on Indo-European roots with a simple grammar, it was intended to be an international second language that people from different countries could learn easily and use to communicate. Thousands of books have been published in Esperanto, and there are 100,000 or more Esperanto speakers in the world according to some estimates.
A Multicultural Presidency? Yes We Can!

“The president’s elderly stepgrandmother brought him an oxtail fly whisk, a mark of power at home in Kenya. Cousins journeyed from the South Carolina town where the first lady’s great-great-grandfather was born into slavery, while the rabbi in the family came from the synagogue where he had been commemorating Martin Luther King’s Birthday. The president and first lady’s siblings were there, too, of course: his Indonesian-American half-sister, who brought her Chinese-Canadian husband, and her brother, a black man with a white wife. […] With a Technicolor cast that looks almost nothing like their overwhelmingly white, overwhelmingly Protestant predecessors in the role… the family that produced Barack and Michelle Obama is black and white and Asian, Christian, Muslim and Jewish. They speak English; Indonesian; French; Cantonese; German; Hebrew; African languages including Swahili, Luo and Igbo; and even a few phrases of Gullah, the Creole dialect of the South Carolina Lowcountry. Very few are wealthy, and some — like Sarah Obama, the step-grandmother who only recently got electricity and running water in her metal-roofed shack — are quite poor.”


A Common Language Disorder is Genetic?

“Scientists have identified the first gene that is associated with a common childhood language disorder, known as specific language impairment (SLI). The gene – CNTNAP2 – has also been recently implicated in autism, and could represent a crucial genetic link between the two disorders. ‘It has long been suspected that inherited factors play an important role in childhood language disorders,’ says Dr Simon Fisher, a Royal Society Research Fellow at the Wellcome Trust Centre, who led the research. ‘But this is the first time that we have been able to implicate variants of a specific gene in common forms of language impairment.’”

Source: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/11/081105180803.htm

Multilingual, Multicultural Searching

“European researchers say they are pushing online culture and heritage research way beyond Google by using a smart search system that is multilingual, multimedia and optimised for cultural heritage. Better yet, this promising system has wide application in other fields.” The system is called MultiMatch and is currently fluent in six languages. “A search entered in Polish can be targeted to look for results in Spanish, English, Italian, Dutch or German,” which are the four languages which the system currently recognizes.

Source: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/12/081224094636.htm

Language evolves culturally not biologically?

“Language in humans has evolved culturally rather than genetically, according to a study by UCL (University College London) and US researchers. […] Professor Nick Chater, UCL Cognitive, Perceptual and Brain Sciences, says: ‘Language is uniquely human. But does this uniqueness stem from biology or culture? [...] Our paper uncovers a paradox at the heart of theories about the evolutionary origin and genetic basis of human language – although we have appear to have a genetic predisposition towards language, human language has evolved far more quickly than our genes could keep up with, suggesting that language is shaped and driven by culture rather than biology.’”

Source: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/01/090119210614.htm
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. 1000 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.
What is the linguistic landscape?

We are surrounded by signs and texts even if we are not always aware of it. We can see language signs on the streets, in shops, buses, billboards while driving on the motorway, but there are also numerous signs in schools, hospitals, theatres, cinemas or the town hall. Some inform us where to go to, what do to (or not to do), and many want to convince us to buy something. From time to time we may stop and pay more attention to a sign because of its colour, its shape, its content, or the languages in which it is written.

But what is this linguistic landscape? Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25) defined it as: ‘The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration.’

Nowadays, with the greater predominance of visual
information in the public space the number of linguistic signs increases enormously. The academic study of the linguistic landscape is of recent date. The study of the linguistic landscape focuses on the analysis of the written information that is available on language signs. Over the last few years several studies were carried out in many countries. The studies report that multilingualism is part of the linguistic landscape almost anywhere across the globe. Professor Eliezer Ben Rafael and his colleagues of the University of Tel Aviv conducted a study in Israel and found the main languages to be Hebrew, Arabic and English, but to a lesser extent also Russian and some other languages. The American researcher Thom Huebner took a close look at the linguistic landscape of the city of Bangkok in Thailand where it is obligatory to use the Thai language. He discovered that the signs include different language and different scripts. Not only did he find the Thai script, but also Roman, Chinese, Arabic, and Japanese scripts. Peter Backhaus, a German researcher in Japan, wanted to select only multilingual signs in Tokyo. Although Japanese is very dominant at first sight, he found that 20% of all signs are multilingual.

The easy availability of digital cameras has encouraged more and more researchers to take a look at the omnipresent linguistic landscape. Nowadays anyone can take an almost unlimited numbers of pictures. The researchers shared the results of their investigations at the first international symposium on the linguistic landscape in Tel Aviv in January 2008.

### The linguistic landscape and language policy

The study of the linguistic landscape can be related to many different areas: media studies, linguistics, second language acquisition, tourism, semiotics or advertising. Here we will look at language policy and multilingualism by comparing two European contexts: the Basque Country and Friesland.

The Basque Country spreads north and south of the Pyrenees; part of it is in Spain and the other part in France. The total Basque population is approximately three million and 91% of the population are Spanish citizens. The languages spoken in the Basque Country are Basque and Spanish (on the Spanish side) and Basque and French (on the French side). Basque is a minority language and almost all speakers of Basque are also fluent in Spanish or French. We did a study of the linguistic landscape in the city of Donostia/San Sebastian on the Spanish side of the border. In this city, Basque is spoken by approximately 30% of the population.

The province of Friesland is in the northwest of the Netherlands. It has about 643,000 inhabitants. Approximately 94% of the population can understand the minority language Frisian and 74% can speak Frisian. The percentage for literacy skills is lower; 65% can read it and only 17% can write the language. Frisian has a relatively strong position in the family, at work and in the community while Dutch is dominant in more formal domains such as education, media, and government. The policy to promote the Frisian language is much weaker than the policy for the Basque language. In the capital of Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, we did a similar study of the signs in the street.

Both Basque and Frisian are minority languages in contact with a much stronger language: Spanish and Dutch. The two situations have much in common but there are also important differences. The official policy to protect Basque is a lot stronger than the policy to protect Frisian. In contrast to Frisian, Basque is the main school language and a requirement for many jobs. There is also a specific policy to use Basque and Spanish in official bilingual signs, and there is even some financial support for signs in Basque displayed by private businesses. Apart from such differences in language policy, it is important to point out that the linguistic distance between Basque and Spanish is much bigger than between Frisian and Dutch. Basque is a non-Indo-European language and Spanish is an Indo-European Romance language while both Frisian and Dutch are Indo-European Germanic languages.

### The linguistic landscape in the Basque Country and Friesland

The study of the linguistic landscape is particularly interesting in multilingual contexts, such as the Basque Country and Friesland. The linguistic landscape reflects the strength and the status of the different languages and it can show how the policies to promote minority languages and multilingualism are developing.

What is the linguistic landscape like in the Basque Country and Friesland?

We analysed the languages used on all the signs in the main shopping streets of Donostia-San Sebastian and Ljouwert-Leeuwarden. We obtained the following results (see table on the next page):
Some data from the linguistic landscape in the Basque Country and Friesland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Donostia-San Sebastian</th>
<th>Ljouwert-Leeuwarden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual and multilingual signs</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs including the minority language</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs including the majority language</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs including English</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results indicate that the use of two or more languages is frequent in both cities but there are important differences. The majority language, Spanish or Dutch, is by far the most usual in both contexts. The use of the minority language, Basque or Frisian, greatly differs. The language policy to promote the use of Basque has a clear effect on the use of Basque in language signs while the use of Frisian is limited.

The use of English is similar in both cities. English is more common in the linguistic landscape of Friesland but the difference is not as big as in the case of the minority language. The spread of English all over the world is also reflected in this study, and most signs in English are from private businesses and advertising. Other languages such as Italian, French and German are also used but to a lesser extent. Around 20 different languages were come upon in the linguistic landscape of both cities.

The linguistic landscape is part of our lives and many languages are part of the linguistic landscape. Its study can give us important information about the strength of languages. Looking and reading the signs makes us aware of multilingual diversity and hopefully it influences in a positive way how we perceive different languages.

Further reading


How many languages can a person learn? 13, like JRR Tolkien? 28, like Giuseppe Mezzofanti, a 19th century Italian Cardinal? Or 32 like Charles Berlitz? The mind-boggling answer is that there doesn’t seem to be any limit! Barbara Zurer points out, however, that "Unlike a savant, we and our children need consistent and prolonged exposure to be able to learn a language. So the limiting factors are time and access to meaningful interactions in more than four or five languages. Two is more common than three. Beyond three, people sometimes report difficulty in retrieval when they know several languages (but that is a problem we can also encounter with a single language). “ From: *Raising a Bilingual Child*, by Barbara Zurer, p. 117.

"The biggest difference between promoting bilingualism and promoting trilingualism is that balancing three languages (or more) in most homes requires more management and attention from the parents. Without the right balance of language exposure, children who are learning three or more languages are likely to become passive users of one of those languages.” From King and Mackey, *The Bilingual Edge*, p. 224.

Language learning and Toilet training: are NOT the same! “Language learning is not like other developmental milestones such as crawling, being toilet trained, and graduating from kindergarten – it’s a life-long process. The downside of this, of course, is that it’s never done the way that toilet training can be checked off the list once and for all once it’s mastered.” From King and Mackey, *The Bilingual Edge*, p.204.

If you are a Bilingual you will have an easier time acquiring a third language! That is because Bilinguals are better language learners! (study by Jasone Cenoz and Jose Valencia, 1994).

Trilinguals are NOT the same as bilinguals! “When two languages are involved, a child has three choices: speak language A, speak language B, or speak a combination of A and B in a single utterance. When three languages are available, the child now has seven choices: language A, language B, language C, or a combination of two of the languages such as AB, AC, or BC, or a combination of all three languages, ABC.” From Xiao-lei Wang’s *Growing up with Three Languages*, p. 34.

### Trilingual countries
- **Switzerland:** French, German, Italian, Romansch.
- **Luxembourg:** German, French, Luxembourgish.
- **Singapore:** Mandarin, English, Cantonese, Malay, Tamil.
- **India:** has 22 official languages, among which are Hindi, English, Urdu, Telugu, Bengali, Punjabi, just to name a few.
- **Indonesia:** Bahasa Indonesia, English, Dutch, Javanese, and more than 580 other dialects and languages.
- **Israel:** Hebrew, Arabic and English.

…and countless more!!! See: [www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0855611.html](http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0855611.html)

### Some books on Trilingualism

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**Articles online**


We have two young kids. Joseph, now 4 years 9 months old, was born in the Netherlands and moved with us to the US at age 3.5 months old. He was very much exposed to the American school environment as he began going to day care/preschool at 8 months old. Louise, now 16 months old, was born in the US and spent her first year in her birth country. She stayed home with me until we moved to Germany.

The One Parent One Language (OPOL) method we use has been through some variations. At the beginning we applied strict OPOL to Joseph, where Mama spoke only Indonesian, Papa only French, and English from the environment. Our home was mostly filled with videos, CDs and children’s books in our languages. When Joseph chose English books, we would translate the story directly into our languages while reading to him. He began to speak clear words in three languages at 2.5 years old.

Our “modified OPOL” began when Joseph was 3.5 years old. Suddenly, he asked us to read books in English. Some other days we went through the same books in our languages, to balance the exposure to Indonesian and French. At age 4, I began to teach him reading in English and gave him piano lessons. The music book and its CD were all in English, but I gave the lessons in Indonesian.

We relocated to Munich when Joseph was 4 years 5 months old and Louise 13 months old. At the time, Joseph could already tell stories in English nearly as well as in our languages. His ability to code switch between sentences was improving, for example, “Papa, je vais aller avec toi. Mama, aku boleh ikut sama papa ya. May I go with you, papa?”

The first few days living in Munich were a mixture of excitement and struggle. Louise was asking for more cuddles and kisses. Joseph was a bit confused because most adults replied slowly and other kids were just staring at him when he spoke English. Still, after only two weeks he began to imitate German intonation when speaking and hum some German kids’ songs from TV. Another OPOL modification happened at this time. As he was missing the English language environment, Joseph requested that I speak English with him once in a while. What I did was to reply in English whenever he initiated an English conversation. Usually after...
some sentences he would switch back to Indonesian.

Joseph goes to Lycee Français, a French school which is bilingual in French and German. At Kindergarten, teaching is conducted by two different teachers. One French, and one German, where the French teacher only speaks French and the other one only speak German. Despite his fluent French, adapting to school was tough for Joseph. He insisted on speaking English in the class during the first weeks, and cried several times because he was missing his friends in the US. We were glad that after one month, Joseph slowly began to fit in fairly well. This fall he will start his French and German literacy at school.

During summer vacation, we spent lots of time at the playground. This particular playground is special as we can hear parents speak several languages to their kids, like Spanish, some Eastern European languages, and Greek and Turkish, while kids speak German with each other. It helps Joseph to pick up some German phrases from his peers. The last time we were there, I heard a girl asked Joseph, “Wie alt bist Du?” (How old are you?), to which he answered in English, “Four.” Another time, a little boy asked, “Wie heisst Du?” and he answered with his name.

With the change of country and school language, we let him watch videos in English, read more English books to him, continue his English reading lessons, and when from time to time he says, “Speak English with me, please,” we follow. It is important for him to keep on connecting to the language he used while in America.

His Indonesian is developing well. As I do not really speak French or German, he is forced to keep on communicating in Indonesian with me. He’s eager to begin reading in Indonesian, but we will wait until he is literate in his school languages.

LOUISE

In the meantime, Louise’s languages develop differently. With a big brother that code switches between first three, and now four languages, and hearing me speaking English to Joseph on occasions, she observes more and talks only when we address her. At 16 months, she says ‘dada’ for bye bye, ‘ouch’ when she hurts herself and the rest she babbles ‘tatata’ and ‘mamama.’ She understands many short phrases like ‘it’s bed time,’ ‘let’s take a bath,’ ‘brush your teeth,’ ‘put your feet off the table,’ ‘don’t touch it,’ both in Indonesian and French. As Joseph loves to talk, ask questions and sing, so does Louise. She likes looking into our eyes while babbling, asking for our reply. During her bedtime story, she points at the pictures and ask ‘tatata?’ and demands the answer. Her brother plays simple songs on the piano, and after almost each lesson, Louise would hum the song in her almost flat babyish tone.

After three months, I can say that we are all feeling relaxed and happy. I saw my kids struggle during their first weeks, which convinces me how crucial it is to be consistent, not only language-wise but also in daily life. We keep on using OPOL, the “pure one” with Louise and “modified one” with Joseph. For daily routine, I immediately gave Joseph his piano and reading-in-English lessons once we arrived. Morning and bedtime rituals for both kids also stay the same as in Chicago. My husband is very busy at work, and could only interact with the kids before going to the office in the morning and in weekends. Whenever he’s home, he dedicates most of his time to play with the kids.

Thanks to the books and articles from great writers, I have been confident enough to keep improving the way I raise our multilingual, multicultural, global nomad children. The story will continue.

Santi Dharmaputra, an Indonesian raised on three continents, previously a lawyer and now stay-homemom, currently lives with her husband and two quadralingual kids in Munich, Germany.
Interview with Xiao-lei Wang

author of Growing up with Three Languages

INTERVIEWED BY ALICE LAPUERTA

1. What is your personal background?

I was born and raised in the People’s Republic of China and came to the United States on a graduate scholarship awarded by the United Nations. I received my Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Currently, I am a tenured full professor in the School of Education at Pace University. Over the years, I have conducted research on children’s language and nonverbal development in different linguistic and cultural communities. I have also worked with immigrant parents and children in various school districts. I studied several languages (English, French, Russian, and Japanese) in addition to speaking three Chinese dialects and Putonghua (“standard” Chinese). I traveled in many parts of the world. My husband and I are raising two trilingual sons.

2. Who is trilingual? How does one define the term (do we need to be able to speak three languages fluently in order to be trilingual?)

A common misconception about trilingual people is that they must speak or use three languages with equal or nearly equal fluency. In reality, few people can speak or use three languages with equal fluency. My working definition for a trilingual is a person who is able to communicate in three languages (spoken or written form) with various levels of proficiency and competence. I believe this is a more realistic definition, which empowers those who are actively using three languages for various purposes in life.

Becoming trilingual is a complex process; many factors influence a trilingual person’s competence. For example, the age of acquisition of the three languages may determine a person’s phonological competence. If a person is exposed to three languages early in his/her life, the chances are he/she will have “native-like” accent. However, age is not the only factor that determines a person’s trilingual competence. The trilingual environment also plays a role. If a person is exposed to an enriched and stimulating trilingual environment, he/she tends to be more competent than someone whose trilingual environment is impoverished. Moreover, a person’s opportunity to use three languages is an important factor in

Dr. Xiao-lei Wang was born and raised in the People’s Republic of China. She came to the USA on a graduate scholarship in 1985. Wang received her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1992. She is a tenured full professor in the School of Education at Pace University. Dr. Wang served as department chair and has been on various university committees and professional organizations. She was a regular speaker for Voice of America on education issues and is a regular invited reviewer for several academic journals. She has also been active in working with multilingual families. Her scholarly publications include topics such as cultural parenting styles, effects of nonverbal communication in teaching and learning, and multilingual acquisition and development. Her recent book Growing up with Three Languages focuses on the challenges and strategies of raising children with heritage languages.
his/her trilingual competence. If a person has more opportunities to use the three languages, it is likely that competency will follow. Finally, a person’s education in the three languages plays is also crucial. The more education a person receives in a language, the more competent he/she will be.

3. **How are Trilinguals different from Bilinguals?**

Although there are many similarities between bilinguals and trilinguals, the two groups are different.

Some researchers such as Charlotte Hoffmann point out that there is a quantity difference between bilinguals and trilinguals. When two languages are involved, a child has three choices: speak language A, speak language B, or speak a combination of A and B in a single sentence. When three languages are available, the child has seven choices; language A, Language B, Language C or a combination of two of the two languages such as AB, AC, or BC, or a combination of all three languages, ABC.

Moreover, the strategies that bilinguals and trilinguals use are different. For example, research Suzanne Quay reported that a Chinese, Japanese, and English trilingual child used different language-mixing strategies from the ones used by bilingual children. In addition, other studies suggest that trilinguals and trilinguals showed differences in their phonological awareness.

Recognizing the differences between bilinguals and trilinguals enables us to observe and appreciate their unique characteristics and to provide appropriate strategies and maximize their linguistic and learning potential.

4. **Why is there such a lack of trilingual first language acquisition studies?**

The reason for the lack of research on trilingual first language acquisition is often due to data collection difficulties. In my own research, I found it extremely difficult to find trilingual families that share the same languages; and even if I identified such families, the parents’ socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels would generally be different.

5. **Do multilingual children tend to mix their languages a lot? More than bilinguals?**

Trilingual children do not necessarily mix their languages more frequently than their bilingual peers do. Language mixing is frequent for any individual who uses more than one language. In the past, language mixing was largely regarded as linguistic deficiency. Now that we have a better understanding about the multilingual phenomenon, we know that, far from being a deficiency, mixing in fact requires sophisticated linguistic skills.

6. **Is it possible for trilingual children to have a balanced development in all three languages?**

In principle, it is possible, yet in reality, it is not so easy. However, it does not mean that parents cannot try to work in this direction. If parents provide their children with ample opportunity to use the three languages in various daily activities, their children will become increasingly proficient in their three languages.

7. “Few realize that the process of becoming trilingual is not as simple and straightforward as they imagine.” – p.14. Thank you for this statement! As a mother of trilingual children, it is heartening to hear this from other people, especially experts. Do trilingual families, then, encounter more challenges than bilingual ones? If so, can you give us some examples?

It is possible that a family raising trilingual children tends to encounter more challenges than a family raising bilingual children simply because it has one more language to work with.

The following are some frequently observed characteristics of trilingual families in my own studies:

- Trilingual families often consist of two parents from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds who are residing in a non-heritage country.
- Parents from trilingual families are often their children’s single source of the heritage-language input.
- The parents sometimes do not understand each other’s heritage language.
8. Simultaneous trilingualism: many people express a concern that this might confuse children or hinder their language development. What is your response?

There is absolutely no convincing evidence to suggest that children who simultaneously develop three languages are confused or hindered in their language development.

If a trilingual child does have a language development issue, it is most likely because of some other reason such as a physical, cognitive, emotional, motivational, and/or identity issues. In fact, I think that multilingual acquisition has many advantages for a child’s language and cognitive development.

9. How can a family overcome the difficulties of one parent not understanding the language of the other? Did your husband understand Chinese or agree to learn when your child was born?

From a family communication perspective, this is a challenging situation. Parents may want to try the following strategies:

First, one parent can facilitate a family conversation by either explaining to the other parent what has been said or asking their children to relay the message.

Second, the parent who does not understand the language can also try to get information from other channels such as facial expressions, hand and body gestures, tone of voice, and conversation context. If you pay attention to the nonverbal cues in a conversational context, you will be amazed to find how much you understand!

Finally, the most mutually beneficial action includes each parent trying to learn the other’s language, or at least try to “pick up” the language in the everyday conversational context. My husband did not understand a single word of Chinese before our older son was born. However, through daily exposures to Chinese (I speak Chinese to my children), he gradually “picked up” some Chinese and can often understand the gist of my conversations with the children. If he does not know, he asks the children to tell him in French.

Some may find such family communication cumbersome. However, I think it makes the family conversation more interesting. Most importantly, children can benefit from such experience in language learning by relaying messages from one language to another.

10. What is your advice to families where one parent is often absent (away at work until late, business trips, etc.)? It seems like this would make it very difficult to establish any kind of equilibrium between languages?

This situation is indeed challenging. If one parent is often absent, the children may lack sufficient input in one heritage-language. However, there is hope. Parents may want to think about creative ways to compensate the lack of input quantity with input quality.

When the often-absent parent does have time to be with the children, they may want to utilize the opportunity to read to the children or engage in various activities in their heritage language. In addition, modern technology can help as well. For example, the often-absent parent can talk to the children on the phone or the computer. The parents can make pre-recorded video or audio tapes for the children. If it is possible, parents may also want to hire heritage-language speakers as babysitters and nannies or arrange activities with the same heritage-language speaking peers.

11. Reading and writing: would you recommend that kids get down one system of writing before tackling the other, especially when there are two different writing systems involved?

There is no reason why children cannot begin to learn how to read and write simultaneously in three languages even when the linguistic systems are different. However, I think that the decision whether to introduce their children to trilingual literacy consecutively or simultaneously is up to the parents ruminating on their specific circumstances.
Xiao-lei Wang, PhD, author of *Growing up with Three Languages: Birth to Eleven*, has both personal and professional experience in raising trilingual children. When asked by Multilingual Living Magazine what her top tips are for parents of trilingual children, she offered the following four fabulous suggestions:

**First, children’s well-being should always come first.** Though learning three languages may be a major task in trilingual children’s lives, their well-being should always come before anything else. Parents need to attend to their children’s emotional needs, and try to balance their play and leisure with language-learning activities.

**Second, communication should be the top priority in trilingual development.** Because trilingual development is challenging, children will make many mistakes when communicating to their parent in heritage languages. If parents fuss about their children’s errors, their children may simply “shut themselves off.” Instead, when children have difficulties expressing themselves in heritage languages or make mistakes, parents can provide assistance and modeling. When children understand that parents are their conversation partners, they will feel encouraged to exchanges their thoughts and feelings with their parents.

**Third, parents may want to use effective strategies.** Effective strategies can help parents achieve their heritage-language learning goals. In my own childrearing practice, I have found that good strategies gave me confidence and guidance.

**Finally, parents should become public advocates for trilingual children.** To create an environment in which trilingual children can achieve their highest potential, parental support by itself is not enough; the whole society, including the public education system needs to be involved. Therefore, parents of multilingual children need to be united on behalf of their children to rally the societal support.

*By Prof. Xiao-lei Wang, author of Growing up with Three Languages: Birth to Eleven (Multilingual Matters).*
"Pas male, ik!" claimed proudly little Zeno (now 29 months old), using all of his three active languages in one sentence. This has been happening more often than not, and the difference with his older brother Milo is quite striking, who had a similar vocabulary at his age, but did not mix.

We are a multilingual family living in Paris, France. I’m the Italian mum, the Belgianite is a Flemish dad who speaks Dutch, and we speak English with each other. Milo (4 years and ½) and Zeno (just over 2) have been exposed to these languages (Italian, Dutch, French and English) since birth, with French being passed over by caregivers since their earlier age. We have chosen the OPOL method, which has given, so far, excellent results with our first child Milo.

Zeno, however, seems to have a harder time sorting out in which linguistic pool each word belongs. His mixing takes place mostly at home and especially when Milo is around. At his daycare they reassured me that he has long ceased speaking Italian, and his French level is perfectly comparable to that of monolinguals his own age. But once he’s at home, his linguistic boundaries vanish and anything can happen!

One reason I can trace is that we have been less strict than before with OPOL; I catch myself replying in French to tell me something about school; or, when he’s tired he’ll squeeze some French words into an Italian sentence (ex: “Mamma, i tres petits cochons hanno catturato il lupo e l’hanno messo nella marmite”; “Non si deve mangiare i bocconi grossi se no le...joues...esplodono”). Milo often makes mixed sentences (IT/DU) when talking to his dad, using Italian when he does not know the corresponding Dutch (ex: ”Papa’, perché metti de lenzen in de ogen?”). The Belgianite also might reply in Italian to Milo. And we code-switch frequently mid-sentence, inadvertently...

Secondly, Zeno looks very much up to his older brother, who uses all of the three languages indiscriminately throughout the day at his own will and need; therefore, he has been lacking the same strict parameters and boundaries that his brother enjoyed at the same age.

Milo addresses him less and less in Italian and more in Dutch and French, depending totally upon environmental circumstances and topics. Zeno follows the flow and always replies in the right language. Within the day, their exchanges are equally spread among the three languages, and they can switch back and forth from one to another within a matter of minutes, depending upon who’s with them and the topic of their conversation.

Zeno’s meta-linguistic awareness, however, is lower compared to that of Milo’s at the same age. Personality-wise
he is much more outgoing, open and communicative than Milo at his age; he also benefits of his brother’s established social network. As a result, he just goofs around in whatever language comes to his mind!

We have decided that this is a critical phase and that we need to pay more attention to our linguistic output, and came up with a few guidelines:

1. **We are back to strictly using OPOL** and doing our best not to mix anymore

2. **When Zeno addresses us in French,** we make sure to provide him with the proper corresponding vocabulary in Italian and/or Dutch

3. **I try to read a book in Italian** to Zeno every day

4. **The Belgianite and I try to spend some time alone with Zeno,** especially during the weekend, in order to clear the semantic confusion in his head, and provide him with some solid and fluid blocks of time where Italian and Dutch are spoken only, by us respectively and specifically with him.

5. **We have begun naming languages** for him again (In Italian we say...in French they say... etc.)

On the positive side, Zeno seems to be more at ease with us speaking the other languages, while Milo used to be uncomfortable when I’d speak French to him in a public situation (that is when I needed to be understood by the people present). In general, I dare to say that it is just harder to provide the same quality time and stimulation to the second child: the time is just not there...but that is not an excuse to fail our second trilingual kid! ☯

Claudia Vaccarone is an Italian native who spent 10 years in the USA, working in the realm of multicultural marketing. She returned to Europe to meet the Belgianite of her dreams, and they are raising together their quadrilingual children in Paris, France. She blogs about it at multitonguekids.blogspot.com
The number of school children speaking a language other than English at home has increased dramatically over the last few decades. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of speakers of languages other than English among 5-17 year olds in the U.S. increased from 3.8M to 9.5M, while those classified as “English Language Learners” increased from 1.3M to 2.9M (1979-2000). This growth is significantly higher than that of the native English speaking population.

At the same time, an increasing body of research demonstrates the importance of helping children build literacy in their home language. Many literacy skills transfer from one language to the other, and children will learn to read, write and speak a second language better if they have a strong foundation in their first language.

There has also been a growing recognition that parental involvement significantly impacts children’s language acquisition, especially if the parents provide their children with a high quality literacy environment from an early age. This, in turn, leads to the best practice that encourages parents to read and speak with kids using their strongest language.

Many educators find it difficult to secure resources that can help their students maintain their home language and encourage home literacy and parental involvement. Bilingual books and CDs are a wonderful resource to help meet the challenge. Such books have text in two languages (usually English and the student’s home language) on each page. The following points outline some of the key benefits of dual-language resources:

**Bilingual books promote the maintenance of home languages.** They encourage bilingual children to read in their home language. Teachers can lend the books to children to take home, and many schools have built bilingual classroom libraries for this purpose. Bilingual staff and parents also can read to children in class or make audiotapes for the students. This is a great way to get parents involved in their children’s education. Conducting bilingual “read-alouds” is also a wonderful way to incorporate diversity in the classroom.

**The books make students and families from non-English households feel more welcome.** Bilingual books allow families to see/read familiar texts, which can show a respect for their culture. The children will also feel proud to share their culture or see it reflected in the classroom. In some cases the stories may relate to their country, while other books have themes that encourage an acceptance of “being different”.

**Dual-language books provide an excellent opportunity to expand the minds of all children.** Bilingual books help teachers introduce the entire class to new languages and stories. They also offer a springboard to educate students about different cultures and traditions. Dual-language stories that help children appreciate and welcome diversity are available and can be particularly useful in diverse classroom settings.

While much more needs to be done to maximize the educational experience of language learners, dual-language materials are excellent resources for supporting the maintenance of home languages and incorporating diversity in the classroom.
French Guiana is a part of the French Republic, yet located at the north-eastern coast of South America, neighboring Brazil and Suriname. It consists of a beautiful untouched rain forest. Not only can you find amazing wildlife, leatherback turtles, exotic butterflies, jaguars, camians and a vast array of snakes, but also a major space centre in Kourou, a city at the coast.

French Guiana is a multilingual haven. There are more than 10 living languages spoken in the Amazonian jungle alone.

French Guiana has much to offer in terms of environment, nature and fauna, but the multilingual experience is a definitely highlight.

Creole is widely spoken after French and is largely written using the French alphabet but does not have the same sounds as the French language. For example: Bonjour, comment ça va? (French) becomes Bonzu Sa to fé? (Creole). Fortunately, French Creole is still being taught in schools. There are also TV programs presented totally in Creole, but not so for the other languages of French Guiana. It seems a language’s popularity is largely due to the community’s social status. Those languages where the communities are poor do not seem to receive the support and funding to survive.

French Guiana cuisine is famous...

Did you know that baby bananas in French Guiana are called Bacove and that bananas are a vegetable here and not a fruit? Indeed, they are reguarly cooked with sauces and fried. Papaye is a popular Amerindian fruit. Not only delicious to eat but in French Guiana it is used to treat insect bites. Take the juice from a green papaye and rub it on the bites being careful not to get it in your eyes.

Papaye Gratin - Amerindian (4 people)

Chose a green papaye weighing a kilo. Peel it and throw out the seeds. Cut it into small pieces. Cook it for about 30 minutes in a saucepan. Add some onions and chopped garlic and grated cheese. Place everything on a slightly oiled oven-safe plate and sprinkle with cheese and breadcrumbs. Bake for 45 minutes in a hot oven. (Dans la peau d’un Papou).

Which country is a member of the European Union but partially situated in South America and has more than ten languages spoken?

The answer is: French Guiana, a wonderful blend of languages and cultures.

French Guiana is a multilingual haven. There are more than 10 living languages spoken in the Amazonian jungle alone.

Guiana’s ethnic population consists of Creoles, Haitians, European (French), Brazilian, Surinamese, Amerindian, Hong Kong Chinese, British Guyana, Hmong, Laotian refugees and Bush Negroes (Patrick Clarkin 2005). Each of these communities speak various languages from which stem numerous dialects. What’s fascinating is hearing these people communicate with other communities and how they switch languages. They have picked up vocabulary and everyday expressions from other communities and are able to converse with one another. The local markets give these people an opportunity to pick up language expressions from other populations.
A year ago, I realised that my daughter Alice (aged 3 years 10 months) needed motivation in order to speak more French. I thought that spending time with French children in a centre aéré (school holiday childcare) would benefit her. So off she went to the local centre aéré for the 1st week of our summer holiday at my parents’ house. It worked brilliantly!

My husband is English, I am French and both our children were born in England. We visit my family in France at least 4 times a year. Despite our frequent trips, I became concerned about Alice’s reluctance to use French with me. She was able to understand and participate in a conversation in my mother tongue but often chose to answer in English. I was worried that, although she was still able to pick which language to use, her English had become very fluent and elaborate whilst her French seemed to have stagnated.

When I collected her from the centre aéré on her first day, I asked her about her day and what she had had for lunch. She replied: “I mangé some pollo!” The centre manager, of Spanish origin, had been going through the whole menu in Spanish, English and French! Alice and I had fought over her use of ‘I’ in any sentences she uttered (for example: “Je veux jouer dehors”). Was she intrinsically so much English that she could not use the French pronoun?

Let’s be honest: code-switching has always taken place in our family. I do not consider it as a ‘problem’, just a natural occurrence, a part of our normal daily life. Some words or concepts cannot be exactly translated. After a stay at her grandparents’ in France, Alice told her dad: “Je suis content de trouver ma trousse pleine de bonbons Kréma,” (she actually uses a pencil case to store her beloved sweets from the brand Kréma).

Bilingualism was on my mind since pregnancy. I thought that speaking, reading French and frequent trips to France would be enough for Alice to pick it up. It got very distressing to observe that between the ages of 2 and 3, her English language skills became dominant very quickly. Also, French was the language she found the most difficult and frustrating to use. I felt very guilty (I work 3 days a week) when other bilingual children with stay-at-home mums started talking in full sentences and Alice was still struggling with everyday expressions. I felt ashamed when people frowned and disapproved clearly when I admitted to (sometimes) answering in English. I was advised to use the OPOL method only and stick to it. I tried but could not stop listening to Alice and interrupting her for the sake of using the ‘wrong’ language. When I tried to be more consistent, Alice reacted very negatively. I remember one particular evening, when I continued asking her to repeat what she had said in French, she simply gave up, left the table and slammed the door. Another time, while I asked
her to “correct” herself, she replied: “I am not talking to you, I am talking to Daddy!” I can see now how this inflexible attitude was ridiculous and potentially harmful. It could have seriously hindered Alice’s progress and more importantly, affected our relationship: why keep talking to your mum if she just concentrates on the form rather than the content? But I really believed I should follow the general advice and “copy” the parents who used OPOL successfully. But, at what cost?

So where are we a year later?

Alice has made tremendous progress in widening her vocabulary, is more confident in speaking, and making fewer mistakes. When talking to her French relatives, English does not pop up any more. When she cannot remember a word, she finds a way of expressing herself. Her English accent has somehow softened, and although she does not speak like a native speaker, one could not guess where she is from, precisely! I admit it took me a while to accept that my own flesh and blood speaks my mother tongue as a foreigner.

I have also stopped feeling guilty about responding in English spontaneously. It tells a lot about my own languages issues and sense of identity.

I have re-adjusted my expectations (though not lowered them). Although we know a handful of children born and bred in the UK who are equally bilingual (they speak as monolinguals), they are a minority. I now believe that we are the norm. We have not ‘failed’ our bilingual child. I am accepting that Alice is neither French nor English, she really is a bit of both, and because of that, some linguistic mistakes will be made. My husband, however, still finds it difficult to hear her talking about her long hairs and her morning cereals.

I have also noticed how bilingualism boosts Alice’s creativity and her ability to transform and manipulate languages effectively. When she grows up, she wants to become a ‘busière’ (a female bus driver). She is certain that words written in capital letters are written in French and those in small letters in English.

Some time ago, I mentioned that Spanish names often end in –o or in –a. Later on that week, I was listening to an Argentinean singer and Alice wanted to know what the song was about. Very impatiently, she turned around and said: “But I thought you spoke espagnolo!”

Now that she is gaining a deeper sense of identity, Alice considers herself as French and English. I suppose this is still confusing for a 4 year-old and, although we live in a very multicultural area of London, Alice sees herself as “not so special” (her words) because unlike Annabelle, her best friend, she can speak 2 languages!!

Alice has now taken on the responsibility of teaching French to her brother Thomas. What about him? I wonder already what his ‘preferred’ or ‘first’ language will be. His first clear, intelligible word was ‘Mamum’ (aged 17 months). I can see some code-switching going on there. I won’t panic this time round!

Finally, as the holidays are getting closer, the question is reoccurring: centre aéré or not centre aéré - that is the question! Last year’s experience was a positive one so I think it is a ‘yes’!
The Multilingualism of Jesus

“Most scholars believe that the historical Jesus primarily spoke Aramaic. It is generally agreed that Aramaic was a common language of Israel in the first century A.D., but the situation is more complex than non-specialists realize. Jesus and his disciples spoke Galilean dialects of Aramaic and Hebrew, which were distinguished from that of Jerusalem. Israeli scholars have established that Hebrew was also in popular use. Jesus probably spoke and used three languages in different situations: Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek. There is debate in academia as to what degree and exactly where these three would have been used. Generally, most scholars believe that (1) the towns of Nazareth and Capernaum, where Jesus lived, were primarily Aramaic-speaking communities, (2) that he was knowledgeable enough in Hebrew to discuss the Hebrew Bible, and (3) that he may have known Koine Greek through commerce as a carpenter in nearby Sepphoris and because Greek was the common language of the eastern part of the Mediterranean Basin since the conquests of Alexander the Great.” Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic_of_Jesus

Cultural Food Taboos

Food taboos and delicacies often arise from cultural and religious beliefs; one person’s meat is another’s poison. The humble hamburger, a mainstay of U.S. cuisine, is a forbidden food for Hindus. Pork is off the menu for many Jews and Muslims. More than 1,400 species of protein-packed insects are part of African, Asian, Australian, and Latin American cuisine, but one would be hard pressed to find these creepy crawlies at a U.S. restaurant (at least intentionally). What are your culture’s food taboos?

Protection against demons

A bindi (from Sanskrit bindu, meaning “a drop, small particle, dot”) is a forehead decoration worn in South Asia (particularly India) and Southeast Asia. Traditionally it is a dot of red color applied in the center of the forehead close to the eyebrows, but it can also consist of a sign or piece of jewelry worn at this location.

The area between the eyebrows (where the bindi is placed) is said to be the sixth chakra, ajna, the seat of “concealed wisdom”. According to followers of Tantrism, this chakra is the exit point for kundalini energy. The bindi is said to retain energy and strengthen concentration. It is also said to protect against demons or bad luck. Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bindi_(decoration)

Window = Wind Eye

The word window originates from the Old Norse word vindauga, from vindr which means wind and auga which means eye, thus “wind eye”.

Window is first recorded in the early 13th century, and originally referred to an unglazed hole in a roof. Many Germanic languages however adopted the Latin word fenestra to describe a window with glass, such as standard Swedish fönster, or German Fenster. The use of window in English is probably due to the Scandinavian influence on the English language by means of loanwords during the Viking Age.

In English the word fenester was used as a parallel until the mid-1700s and fenestration is still used to describe the arrangement of windows within a façade. Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Window

Santa Claus around the World

Belgium:  Pere Noel (“father Christmas”)
Chile:  Viejo Pascuero (“old man Christmas”)
China:  Dun Che Lao ren (“Christmas old man”)
Germany:  Weihnachtsmann (“Christmas man”)
Finland:  Joulupukki (“Yule Goat” = his goat-skin clothing)
Hungary:  Mikulas (St. Nicholas)
Italy:  Babbo Natale (“father Christmas”)
Japan:  Hoteiosho (a god or priest who bears gifts)
Lithuania:  Kaledu Senelis (“grandfather Christmas”)
Netherlands:  Kerstman (“Christmas man”)
Norway:  Julenissen (“Christmas gnome”)
Russia:  Ded Moroz (“grandfather frost”)
Spain:  El Nino Jesus (“the child Jesus”)
Sweden:  Jultomten (“Yuletide gnome”)
A Review of: 

Growing up with Three Languages

By Corey Heller

Although it has been said over and over again that trilingual children are not the same as three monolingual children wrapped up into one (or even the same as bilingual children with an added language), most of the data we have comes from studying monolingual and bilingual children. There just aren’t many studies out there focusing specifically on the development, needs, and issues of trilingual children, let alone books specifically geared toward parents of trilingual children. Growing up with Three Languages has been published specifically to change the current landscape. Not only is the author, Xiao-lei Wang, an expert in multilingualism, she understands the trials, tribulations and joys of raising trilingual children first hand!

Growing up with Three Languages is the culmination of a monumental task. It was 11 years in the making as the author observed the development of her children, Léandré and Dominique, as they were exposed to three languages from birth. It also speaks to the feat of parents raising children outside their native countries (Switzerland and China), something which is becoming more and more commonplace. Packed with personal experiences, real-world examples and research, this book gives insight into how we can make three languages manageable and delightful in our own families.

Growing up with Three Languages is organized by the natural progression of a growing child: After an introductory chapter on the intricacies and complexities of trilingualism, the book goes on to cover the following chapters: In the Beginning, The Home Years, Transition from Home to Preschool and Kindergarten, The Elementary School Years, Identity and Personality Development: Children’s Voices, and finishes with the author’s concluding remarks.

The embedded tips, strategies and her family’s real-world examples are definite highlights of Growing up with Three Languages. For example, strategies on how to maximize home-language exposure time after children have started school - an especially difficult time for trilingual families! And the role that targeted discussion plays in the lives of inter-racial children.

Whether your child is still in the womb, is romping around on the playground at school or is engaging in serious conversations about trilingualism and culture, Growing up with Three Languages is sure to offer you insights in how to prepare for what is to come and/or relieve your current concerns and confusion. Raising trilingual children is not necessarily easy but with the right tools it can become something truly joyful.

— Multilingual Living Magazine — Winter 2009 33
Question:
I am hoping you can help me with this problem. My husband and I have a 9 month old baby girl. I was born in Poland and speak 5 languages: Polish, English, Hebrew, French and Russian. My husband was born in the USA and apart from English speaks some Hebrew. We decided that he would speak English to our daughter and I would speak Hebrew to her. It’s been working well so far. However, now I think I would also like our daughter to pick up Polish from me. Is there a way that I can teach her two languages and if there is please tell me what’s the most efficient way to do so. Another question is whether I can introduce our daughter to Spanish by getting her a Spanish speaking nanny. Do you think four languages all at once would be too much? Please let me know. Thank you very much. Marilyn

Answer:
Children will learn any and all languages that are used around them in natural ways. Children also learn very soon that a language is the way to communicate effectively with the people who matter to them, and if those people speak different languages, so will the children. So your girl will have no problem learning four languages. This is the short answer to your question.

The long answer is that, having said this, there is one important question that you may want to ask yourself. Do you want to expose your girl to four languages because that would appeal to her or because that would appeal to you? Learning languages for its own sake is great fun (I love it, for example), but children don’t do it for fun, as said: they do it because it matters to them. If your nanny becomes part of the family in a way that Spanish also becomes part of it, no problem at all. But if you’re considering a nanny just for the sake of one more language, then you may end up with an unhappy nanny and an unhappy child. It’s the other way around: it is the people who matter to children, the languages they speak are as irrelevant to them as the clothes they wear. There’s no great point either in wearing different clothes just for the sake of wearing them.

I see no problem with Polish, English and Hebrew. These are family languages, which Spanish clearly isn’t. Your girl will learn Spanish very willingly if and when she finds a very interesting friend, her own age, who speaks it, for example. And you may come to find out very soon that children make their own decisions about which languages they want to speak, and which languages to speak to whom! I hope this helps!

Madalena
Question: I need some advice on language approaches with my son. I am from India and so is my husband. I am bilingual (speak Bengali, Telugu, Hindi and English), but my husband can speak only Telugu, Hindi and English. I want our son to learn both languages (Bengali and Telugu). We live in Memphis, Tennessee, USA. I read about the OPOL approach but I can't seem to stick to it. I seem to change languages from Bengali to Telugu, when I am around my in-laws. My husband, on the other hand, seems to speak in Telugu with him when he remembers to. Also, when we are tired, we tend to speak in English with him. We speak in Hindi and Telugu with each other a lot. We don't speak to him in Hindi. My fear is that if I switch from speaking in Bengali (which is not so often) to speaking in Telugu full-time with our son, he will never pick up Bengali. I really want our son to be bilingual. Will this hamper his Bengali/Telugu learning ability? Which language will he eventually pick up? What should be our approach? Do we use Bengali/Telugu DVDs/Books/CDs? How do we stick to the approach? I am so confused. I don't know which language to speak to him. Sometimes, I wish I didn't know to speak Telugu. Please help.... Thanks, Meenakshi

Answer: Let me start by telling you that you are in very good company. I too had heard about the OPOL, thought that I had to stick to it and found myself unable to do so. Then I realised why: one person—one language: ‘one language’ means monolingualism, right? I am not monolingual and neither are you. That was the problem: not with me, but with the OPOL itself, which is a policy devised by and for monolingual caregivers. It just cannot work for multilinguals, because, well, we’re not monolinguals.

I just relaxed, from then on, and so did my husband. We spoke to our children whatever language came naturally at any moment. For example, we all used daddy’s language to discuss celebrations related to his culture. Your children will also learn about different cultures associated with each language, right? Everything from how to use polite words to how to use appropriate body language. If you’re teaching them cultures naturally, why not teach them languages as naturally? This realisation meant that we could enjoy being parents and stop worrying about being ‘language teachers’. Children don’t need language lessons, they need love and care in whatever language.

Your husband is absolutely right in wanting Telugu to be a family language, because grandparents are a crucial part of the family. Same thing for Bengali and any other language of relevance to your family. So you don’t need to worry about which language to choose, just use the one that is nearest to your heart at any time. Your son will understand, follow your example, and he will become as multilingual as you. This was how you yourself became multilingual, wasn’t it?

You may want to read what I said to Alice Lapuerta in an interview that is published in the March/April 2007 issue of Multilingual Living Magazine about my book, Three is a Crowd? Acquiring Portuguese in a trilingual environment. Speaking to children in more than one language doesn’t ‘crowd’ the brain and cannot therefore “hamper” language learning. It’s the opposite in fact, multilingualism boosts your brain activity instead! Come back if you’re still wondering about anything.

Madalena

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) Multilingual Matters. 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
Alphabet Book

Want to get your child thinking about letters? Then help her to create her very own alphabet book! Start by collecting old magazines, extra photos, leftover greeting cards and whatever else you have that contains photos. You will also need one blank piece of paper for every letter in your language's alphabet. For example, in English there are 26 letters, so 26 pieces of paper would be needed.

Once you have everything collected, you are ready to go! Start by having your child write the first letter of the alphabet on the top of the first blank sheet of paper (or you can write it if she isn’t able to). Then together go through your magazines, photos and cards to find pictures that start with the first letter of the alphabet. Cut out those pictures and have your child glue them to the blank piece of paper with the first letter of the alphabet written on it. Go through the alphabet, one letter at a time, filling each page with pictures (remember to take your time). Don’t worry if your child is not quite ready to identify many pictures which contain the correct initial letter. The fun is having time together speaking your language while looking at photos. Be open to many different interpretations for what starts with the letter you are looking for. For example, a blue T-shirt in a photo would count for the letter B as well as the letter T. And if your child is more enamored with the glue than the language, that is just fine!

Numbers for Letters

Want to get your child writing in your language? What could be more fun than figuring out a coded message? All you need is a piece of paper, a pencil and some creative thinking for this activity. First you will want to give each letter of your language’s alphabet a number. Write the letters across the top of the page and a number for each letter below it (the numbers do not need to be in numeric sequence) so that your child can figure out which number corresponds to which letter.

Now you are ready to create your coded message. Once you know the sentence(s) that you want to write, draw a short line for each letter in each word (with spaces between words). Then write the corresponding number for each letter below each short line. Explain to your child how the encoding works (one number for each letter) and let him write out the letters and read the encoded message.

You can make the activity even more challenging by leaving out a few numbers when creating the letter-number encoding (but writing it down for yourself). Then your child can figure out which letter goes with the missing numbers as he writes out the sentences.

Want a way to incorporate math into the activity? Have each letter represent an equation, e.g. \(2+2=?\). The answer to the equation is the number for that letter. Talk about packing in the language fun!

Kids Quiz

The word “quiz” has gotten a bad rap after having to do so many in school. But what about a quiz that is fun and uses your language to boot? Here is your chance to make your own Trivial Pursuit. All you have to do is write out some questions that your child might enjoy answering. For example, “What is the name of the person married to your uncle?” or “Who puts away the dishes in our house?” or come up with some questions which may not have a definitive answer - it gives everyone the chance to chime in with an answer. You can also let the tables be turned and have your children ask you quiz questions (or even have the questions go back and forth).

What you want to emphasize to everyone is that the game must be done in your language. They aren’t allowed to answer back in another language. However, imposing penalties isn’t necessary and may even make the game a task (e.g., people losing points when they use the other language). So you need to find a balance between keeping things fun and trying to enforce the language rules. Keep the quiz questions on hand for future fun!
Oxford University Press
First words / Take off / Picture dictionaries

Oxford University Press is known for its quality materials, and the language-learning books we received are no exception. The books in the First Words series (Spanish, German and French) are aimed at children learning a language other than English. They are full of beautiful illustrations and helpful bilingual vocabulary (English plus a second language) organized by topic. They provide a perfect beginning to vocabulary learning with your child and would be a great reference book for children who are trying to master writing in their second language.

The Oxford Picture Dictionary for Kids (Spanish-English) and The Oxford Picture Dictionary for the Content Areas (English-Spanish) are aimed at Spanish-speaking children who are trying to master the English language. However, they could just as easily be used to learn Spanish instead. These books are also packed with captivating illustrations and are organized by topic. Although chock full of vocabulary, the authors were careful not to overwhelm readers.

For the more advanced learners in your household, the Oxford Picture Dictionaries (English-Spanish, English-Chinese and English-Arabic) are valuable resources. Each contains more than 4,000 words presented with illustrations as well as useful sentences. No topic is left unaddressed in these comprehensive books. For those who prefer to learn a language with an audio component, the Take Off In... language learning packages (book plus complete series of audio CDs) are an easy way to jump right into learning a foreign language. They too are targeted toward a more mature language learner and make learning on the go possible. These language packages take the language learner from the basics of the alphabet to learning relatively complex sentences. For more information go to: www.oup.com

My Unique Family
Multilingual living with Jay Jay & Totte

My unique family! is a lovely book with fabulous drawings! It will make any family proud to be multilingual and multicultural. JayJay and Totte, the main characters, are two Swedish-Haitian-American brothers who live right outside of New York City together with their Swedish mom and Haitian dad. They speak English, Swedish and Kreyol. By the end of the book, you and your children will have come to know multilingual and multicultural families around the world as well as facts about their individual countries. As a bonus, you will learn how to speak a few sentences in each culture's language! What a delightful way to celebrate language and culture!

For more information: www.jayjayandtotte.com Cost: $19.99

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Korean Bulgogi

Why go to a restaurant to savor this fantastic meal? Make it at home! Our Managing Editor’s mother sent us this recipe from her own recipe box. For exceptional results, start with meat which is partially frozen and slice it as close to paper-thin as possible (if you have a meat slicer, use that). The vegetables and other additions are totally optional!

**Ingredients:**
- 2 lbs sirloin steak
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 cup Korean soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 10 cloves garlic minced
- 6 tablespoons oil
- 1 tsp sesame seeds (optional)

Optional Additions:
- 1-2 chopped bell peppers
- 3 chopped green onions
- leeches
- whole garlic cloves
- mushrooms (roughly chopped)

**Directions:**
1. Cut beef into paper-thin slices. (Meat is easier to cut if it is half frozen!)
2. Mix oil and sugar and pour over beef, work it in well and let stand for 2 hours.
3. Add the remaining ingredients (garlic, soy sauce, pepper) to the meat.
4. Marinate for at least 30 minutes (best if left overnight).
5. Fry the meat in a pan on medium-high heat (or a table BBQ) until cooked through. If including the optional vegetables, add them to the pan after the meat has first cooked a bit.

Serve with white rice and with romaine lettuce leaves. Fold a little rice and piece of bulgogi into a leaf, make a burrito-like little package and enjoy – together with kimchi!

Serves 4-6 people.
TRILINGUALS ARE NOT THE SAME AS MONOLINGUALS

“Trilinguals are often unfairly measured with the same yardstick as monolinguals. Recently, researchers have expressed some legitimate concerns as to whether it is problematic to evaluate trilingual children with the criteria of monolingual children. This issue is certainly complex. On the one hand, studies have shown that children who have acquired more than one language seem to go through the same universal developmental milestones in much the same order and the same way in their different languages. Therefore, it seems that it is not entirely inappropriate to compare trilingual children with monolingual children. After all, they are all children. On the other hand, considering the different language learning environments between monolingual and trilingual children, we cannot assume that a trilingual child is three separate monolingual children in one. As has been suggested, once more than one language is involved, children will be inherently different from monolingual children. Although the acquisition process may be similar, the actual acquisition results may be different. ... There is a danger in trying to understand the developmental experiences of the child with more than one language simply in the context of what we know about the monolingual child.

Research shows that trilingual children use different strategies from those used by monolingual children in learning languages. Therefore, children with more than one language are a specific type of speaker-hearer who must be considered in their own right.”


TRILINGUALS ARE NOT THE SAME AS BILINGUALS

“Trilingualism is generally treated in the literature as another type of bilingualism and is frequently explained as a special phenomenon of bilingualism. Thus, theories and findings from studies of bilingualism are often assumed to be applicable to trilinguals by extension. Although there are many similarities between bilingualism and trilingualism (perhaps more than between the latter and monolingualism), some researchers remind us that being trilingual is not the same as being bilingual, as three languages can be manifested in production in more ways than two languages. As has been pointed out by some researchers, a quantitative difference exists between bilingualism and trilingualism. When two languages are involved, a child has three choices: speak language A, speak language B, or speak a combination of A and B in a single utterance. When three languages are available, the child now has seven choices: language A, language B, language C, or a combination of two of the languages such as AB, AC, or BC, or a combination of all three languages, ABC. In addition, there are social, cultural, psychological and personality-related factors that may assume disproportionately high significance in influencing trilingual competence compared with their influence in the case of bilingual competence.

In recent years, researchers have begun to examine the possible differences in our understanding of trilingualism, the findings are often based on small samples, and thus are not conclusive. Obviously, a lot more research needs to be conducted before we can pinpoint what the additional linguistic system exactly does to a trilingual child. For now, it is important that we do not equate a trilingual with a bilingual.

Some people use the verb straddle to describe the linguistic situation of a bilingual (one leg is on one language / culture and the other is on the other language / culture). I think it would be hard to find an equally accurate verb to describe the linguistic situation of a trilingual. To use bilingual children’s language development as a measure to judge trilingual children would diminish the importance of the unique characteristics of trilingual children.