The Bilingual Family Newsletter

MULTILINGUAL MATTERS

Editor:
George Saunders **MARCH 1985 VOLUME 2 No. 1**

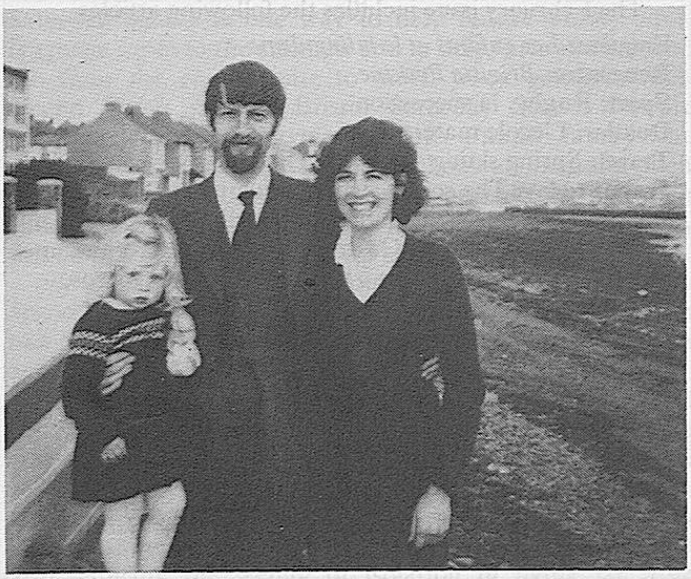
EDITORIAL

My family and I returned from a wintry German Advent just in time for a relaxing Australian summer Christmas holiday before the resumption of work and school. Our sincere thanks to all the friendly and hospitable people in Hamburg who made our stay so interesting and enjoyable.

My requests for letters from readers have certainly not fallen on deaf ears! Many thanks to the many, many people who have written. Please be patient if you have not yet received a personal acknowledgement from either myself or the publishers.

Our competition for the best short anecdote about your most interesting or amusing bilingual experience or the best bilingual joke or cartoon has not yet attracted any entries, so please don't be shy! We look forward to publishing some entries in the next issue.

You may have noticed in the Contacts section of our last issue a note from a reader in France wishing to exchange video cassettes to help maintain her own and her children's standard of English. I would warmly recommend such exchanges of video cassettes as an excellent means of maintaining children's (and parents'!) interest in a language and giving the language a better chance to compete with the local language. While in Germany I taped many television programmes and these are now being watched with great enjoyment by all three children. Future exchanges with friends in Germany will ensure that our supply of viewing material in German does not dry up.



Solena, Ken and Marie-Louisé George

A CASE OF FAMILY LANGUAGE PLANNING

Ken George

Many parents who wish to bring up their children bilingually are faced with the dilemma of deciding which language or languages their children are to be exposed to in the home and how this should be done. The following interesting account from Ken George looks at this problem and discusses the decision he and his wife arrived at. We wish them well in their bilingual endeavours and look forward to hearing at a later date how it has all worked out.

Our family is just starting out on the great bilingual (or indeed multilingual) path already followed by many contributors to the *Bilingual Family Newsletter.* I am a Cornishman and my wife Marie-Louise is Breton; at the moment we are living in Cornwall. We both speak the same four languages: English, French, Breton and Cornish; and this combination probably makes us unique. It may well interest readers to learn how this came about, and what our language strategy is within the family.

Firstly, a short description of the present state of Cornish and Breton might be helpful. They are members of the Brittonic branch of the Celtic family of languages. They are similar to Welsh, but closer to each other than either is to Welsh, as close as Spanish and Portuguese, or Dutch and German.

Cornish was spoken in the Middle Ages by over 30,000 people in Cornwall, but the language retreated westwards before the advance of English, and died out as a community language in about 1800. In the twentieth century, Cornish has been revived, and is spoken by a small but growing number of enthusiasts, a few of whom have been sufficiently inspired to raise their children bilingually in Cornish and English.

Breton is spoken by some half a million people in Brittany, but nearly all of them are over 50 years of age, since very few Breton-speaking parents passed the language on to their children after the Second World War. Unless something is done on a large scale, therefore, the number of Breton speakers in 30 years' time will be drastically and tragically reduced.

Continued on page two

Marie-Louise's parents are native speakers of Breton, but they had to learn French at school in Brittany, and were educated almost entirely through the medium of French. Like most Breton-French bilinguals, they read and write French without difficulty, read Breton well enough but have difficulty in writing it, because they have never been taught to write it. In the home they spoke only French to their children, but frequently spoke Breton to each other. Thus Marie-Louise grew up as a native speaker of French, but with the ability to understand Breton. In order to speak, read and write Breton, she had to attend summer schools.

My parents are native speakers of English, and after their wedding, they learned Esperanto at evening classes. They spoke only English to my brother and me. My father taught me Esperanto when I was seven years old, but hardly ever spoke to me in Esperanto in the home. I still understand it, but cannot speak it easily owing to lack of practice.

Like most Cornish speakers, I learned the langauge at evening classes as an adult. When I met Marie-Louise, my school French was even rustier than her school English, and so I quickly learned Breton, which we have used until recently as the principal language between us. After our wedding, we lived for 14 months in Brittany, where we both spoke French at work and Breton at home. We then moved to Cornwall, and Marie-Louise quickly improved her English, and learned Cornish.

Our daughter Solena was born in April 1983, and at first we could not decide which language to speak to her. Eventually we should like her to be fluent in all four languages (if not more), but the immediate question was: how many languages should we use initially, which ones, and who should use what?

Although there are no other parents in exactly our situation, we found it useful in making our choice to look at the experience of bilingual and multilingual families in Cornwall and in other Celtic countries. The principal lesson to be learned from the Cornish bilingual families is that in order to counteract the overwhelming dominance of English in the environment, Cornish has to be used almost exclusively in the home. The position in Wales is not comparable, because of the existence of Welsh medium schools and the strength of Welsh as a community language.

We felt reasonably confident about raising our daughter bilingually, having seen the success of several friends who speak two languages to their children, and having read George Saunders' book. The same confidence could not be extended to three languages. In particular, we wished to avoid the experience of one family in Cornwall, in which the father spoke Cornish and English to his son, and the mother Welsh and English, and the parents English to each other. The result was that at age three, the boy understood all three languages and spoke them all; at four, he understood them, but would speak only English; now, at age five, English has taken over completely.

We therefore felt happier about starting off with two languages. My parents wished us to raise Solena bilingually in French and English, but since Marie-Louise and I share a great love of Celtic languages, we were determined to speak at least one to her from the start. Thus Marie-Louise is speaking Breton to her, and I am speaking English. In this way, she will be able to communicate with both pairs of grandparents. We continue to use Breton to each other when Solena is present, but when she is not we use Cornish.

This choice cannot please everybody. At times we have our own reservations about it. It must surprise many Cornish speakers, who would expect me to be the first to speak Cornish to my child. Yet the great similarity between Cornish and Breton, which might be a source of confusion if we tried to speak both now, can be turned to advantage at a later date. It should be very easy for Solena to pick up Cornish, once she has a measure of competence in Breton. French is another matter; Marie-Louise intends to teach French to Solena when she reaches primary-school age.

Having formulated our policy some months ago, we put it into action. At 11 months, Solena could understand eight words in Breton and one in English. By 14 months, we had lost count of the number she could understand, but she had still not uttered any recognisable words. Then, in the last month, to our great delight, she has begun to speak. When just 15 months old, she had a vocabulary of 17 words; ten English, five Breton, and two which might belong to either language. Almost every day, she adds to this total, and we look forward to the future with great interest and expectations.

AN BANER
Kernewek

The Cornish Banner **ISSN 0306-9079**

Trelispen, Gorran, St. Austell, Kernow.
An Baner Kernewek, CNP's quarterly journal,
70p or direct from the publishers,
£4.00 inland, £5.00 overseas, £6.50 airmail.

LE MAGAZINE

The aim of this new Franco-British monthly publication is to help French-speaking people cope with everyday life in Britain and to explain a little more about life in France today to the British.

The February issue includes the following articles.

Enquête: *Les enfants et le bilinguisme*
Rencontre: *Brigitte Peskine*
Sport: Rugby: la succession
Dossier: L'école maternelle
Travel: Spring skiing
France today: The comic-strip phenomenon
Rubriques: Agenda de février, B. D.: Hislaire, Mode, La France au Fil du Stylo, Gastronomie: Un restaurant, une recette; Table talk, Lèche – Vitrines, In Other Words, Knitting with French wools, Petites Annonces.

Single issues (Price £1.00)
or an annual subscription £8.00 are available from:

Le Magazine
P.O. Box 112
Chesham
Bucks HP5 1AU.

The publishers would also be happy to send a sample copy to anyone considering a subscription.

IN DEFENCE OF SATURDAY SCHOOLS

Mike Grover

In the last issue of the Newsletter, Michael and Marie Thérèse Byram discussed educating their children in French at home one afternoon a week during normal English school hours. One matter which they raised was that of Saturday Schools, that is, schools run outside normal school hours by ethnic groups to teach their languages. My own feeling is that such schools can be very useful *aids* to, but *not substitutes* for, someone in the home regularly and consistently using the language for communication with the children. Mike Grover, an Englishman with a Finnish wife and two English-Finnish bilingual sons, Tommi (eight) and Sami (six), himself fluent in Finnish, here discusses some of the benefits which a Saturday School can give.

I would like to discuss a few points raised by Michael and Marie Thérèse Byram. The first of these is the obvious point that they are in a very fortunate position to be able to adjust their own working situation to allow such an activity. I do not know how many other families it would apply to.

The more important points, however, arise from what I think are serious misunderstandings of the value and functions of Saturday Schools to children and to their parents. The idea that Saturday School makes children 'feel different in a negative way', whilst possible, is highly unlikely if tackled correctly by the parents. Indeed, it seems that Michael and Marie Thérèse's children might be feeling the same *on occasion* as they report, 'although there have been moments when they have complained, such complaints may be *genuine,* or may be motivated by other causes – *missing the playtime with friends'* (my italics). Surely missing playtime with friends is a genuine negative feeling, the very one that they ascribe by implication to Saturday Schools. I think the Byram family are missing some of the very positive aspects of Saturday Schools which education at home cannot possibly give.

(i) The first of these is that Saturday Schools have many children of a wide range of abilities. The children not only have the opportunity to learn the language in a formal setting but also to play together, to realise that there are other children in the same situation and to have fun with their second language. One of the comments made about our children when we travel in Finland is that they sound like 'little adults'. The mixing with other children at the Saturday School is one way to help reduce purely adult language input to the children and to help them not to stand out from the crowd quite to much when going to their second home. In our Bristol Saturday School we are particularly lucky in having one fully Finnish family who regularly come to the Saturday School to maintain their social contacts with Finnish families and also so that their child shall learn some Finnish in a formal setting. Obviously this helps with the input of child language to our children.

(ii) The second point about our particular Saturday School is that we also run adult classes to help the English half of the family to learn the partner's language and to thus help in the promotion of a truly bilingual family.

(iii) The third, and very important, aspect, is that most of the non-English parents stay to chat over coffee, exchanging views about the problems/benefits of living in a foreign country, the development of the children's second language, etc. We have found this mutual support aspect to be very important in promoting the success of bilingual families and also reducing the feeling of isolation in living far from home.

(iv) The fourth and related point is that there are opportunities for various self-help activities; for example we initially pooled the resources of all the families in terms of books, newspapers, etc. and were thus able to form an Inter-Family Loan Library. This has recently been supported by additional books from the Finnish Church Guild.

With regard to Michael and Marie Thérèse's problems of organising a French group where they are, if they think that is difficult, think of the families related to countries with far smaller populations both in the home country and here in England. Our Saturday School in Bristol has two children's groups (pre-school playgroup and formal classes) and two adults' groups (beginners and advanced). Some of these families travel quite considerable distances to come. We organise the Saturday School every two weeks and the terms are fairly short so that numbers do not get too depleted by Christmas, holidays or just plain apathy. We try to make sure the children and adults have fun and so far very rarely have had problems with children not wanting to come. Our drop-out rate in 1984/5 is zero so far, except for one family who moved to a distance of two hours' drive (just a little too far – some of our families travel for one hour each way).

Continued on page four

Part of the Anglo-Finnish Saturday School, Bristol (The other part was at the wedding of one of the teachers – a good way of maintaining numbers!)

RECOGNITION OF CHILDREN'S BILINGUALISM

It is good to see that some young people's organisations encourage and acknowledge their members' bilingual skills. A young friend of the family who is a member of the scouting movement recently showed me a book entitled *Adventures in Cubbing. A Book for Ten-year-old Cubs**. One of the Achievement Badges cubs can earn is for linguistic ability and is intended for cubs who have come from another country and/or speak to their parents in a language other than English. To qualify for this badge, cubs have to carry out the following tests in any language other than English:

1. Carry on a conversation for ten minutes.
2. Write a letter of at least 100 words to the examiner.
3. Translate in their own time, and if necessary with the help of a dictionary, an easy passage from a book or magazine.

Having such an Achievement Badge undoubtedly helps to bestow a certain amount of prestige on being reasonably proficient in a language other than the language spoken by the majority of the population. The young bilingual cub can see that his 'other language' is acknowledged by the Scouting Association and this may well encourage him to work at maintaining this language, both in its spoken and written forms. It is also gratifying to parents to see that their language is given recognition. A cub who passes the above three tests is given a badge to wear on his uniform showing the language or languages he can speak in addition to English. The existence of this particular badge also helps to make monolingual English-speaking cubs aware of other languages spoken in the community and, hopefully, appreciative of a knowledge of more than one language.

*Published by The Scout Association of Australia, 1973.

Continued from page three

We charge each family a small amount and pay teachers a fee plus their expenses. We are greatly indebted to the Finnish Church Guild for their initial financial and on-going moral support and the Finnish Education Authorities who have taken over the provision of some financial support to the Saturday School and also provided some free text books. Without this financial support, life would be much more difficult than it is at present, but such is the strength of feeling of our families that I am sure we would survive somehow.

I would sum up by saying that whilst education at home is good for the children's language development (and if our families want to succeed in producing truly bilingual children, they must read and speak to their children in the second language at home as well), the Saturday School provides the important additional benefits of mixing with other families speaking the same languages and thus enabling them to learn some of the world (in our case) in 'The Finnish Way'.

Finally, why not use this Newsletter to try and set up or expand a Saturday School in your area and if anyone in the Bristol (England) area would like to see a happy and successful school in operation please contact me at the Clevedon address of the Newsletter.

FUN WITH WORDS

- Kokoo koko kokko kokoon.
- Koko kokkoko?
- Koko kokko.

- *Gather (the) whole fire together.*
- *(The) whole fire?*
- *(The) whole fire.*

N.B. Finnish does not have a definite or indefinite article.

More suggestions please.

ADVICE ON ESTABLISHING PLAYGROUPS

I took out a subscription to your Newsletter not for family or personal reasons but because I am chairman of the committee of the Preschool Playgroups Association which looks after most of the day-to-day concerns of playgroups and mother and toddler groups in this country and abroad.

I was particularly interested in the article on mother tongue playgroups for pre-school bilingual children. The aim of our Association is to encourage and help parents to provide for the needs of their children, and our network of volunteers is always available to provide support and advice. We have over 12,000 member groups in England and Wales catering for approximately half a million children, plus a very large number of associated mother and toddler groups. Over 300 of our members are overseas and some of them are running mother-tongue playgroups or mother and toddler groups.

We have a number of publications which offer advice on such things as starting a group, applying for grants, play activities, tax, insurance, the choice and employment of staff, etc. We encourage groups to adopt our model constitution which gives parents control of the finances of the group and the right to hire and dismiss the leaders. It ought to be mentioned that playgroups in this country have to be registered and comply with certain regulations if the children are left by their parents in charge of another person. No such regulations apply if the parents remain on the premises and retain responsibility for their own children.

(Mrs) Helen Caldwell
Chairman, Field Services Committee
Pre-school Playgroups Association
Alford House, Aveline Street, London SE11 5HD, England

SOME LETTERS FROM READERS

I think your idea of forming a registry of families wishing to make local contacts is an excellent one. It would be lovely to meet other families in Holland who are perhaps also struggling in the face of prejudice to bring up children bilingually and to have the children meet and speak English together occasionally.

I am also totally in favour of 'mother tongue' playgroups for pre-school children. I only wish such a thing had been available to my kids when they were younger.

I'm British and married to a Dutchman. My children are aged six and four years and they were born here in Holland. As I knew no word of Dutch when the children were born, we naturally only spoke English to them and left it to the other members of the family and playgroup leaders to teach them the rudiments of Dutch. Since then I have gone to classes and managed to obtain a reasonable working knowledge of the language, but my husband and I have continued to speak only English to the children, and they are far more fluent in English now than Dutch. This poses some problems when we visit family and friends, or when other children come to play; the two languages then become intermingled, but still completely understandable to myself and the children.

I have two English-speaking girl friends, also married to Dutchmen, who have decided that it would be easier for their children to learn only one basic languge, and so none of them can speak or understand a word of English. I find this rather a pity, as their British grandparents cannot communicate during the annual vacations. I'm in no doubt that, despite outside pressures to the contrary, we're doing the 'right thing' in making our kids fully bilingual.

I was so relieved to read about other bilingual couples who are making a success of rearing their children using two languages. I have had so much opposition from various quarters, insisting I was hindering the children's development and that they would become backward and tongue-tied if I did not teach them their father tongue in the home. This, of course, has not happened. They are both normal, wild and outspoken little people; both of them are holding their own at school, learning at the same rate as the Dutch-born children and showing no signs of suffering because of their 'handicap'. My older son is inclined to translate for me what he is writing, e.g. 'Look, Mum, I can write "tree".', and he proceeds to write *boom*. They know there are some people to whom they can use one language and others to whom they can use 'Mummy's language', and this works out amazingly well for them.

The whole family has a lot of fun and pleasure from funny word games and this is also educational and lets them see it's not such a serious matter after all.

Thank you for bringing out this most open-minded magazine. It's just a great pity it wasn't available years ago when we were starting out. Keep up the good work.

Mrs Phyl L'Honoré Naber, Bilthoven, Holland

We have seen the first issue of your Newsletter (we are monolingual grandparents!) It seems to us that the Newsletter would be most helpful to us as grandparents, mainly in advising us what *not* to say and how *not* to butt in.

A. K. Ross, England

How about sending a gift subscription to your parents or friends.

A recent article in the *Japan Times* mentioned your Newsletter. As an Australian married to a Japanese and struggling to bring up my two children in a bilingual home environment, I am greatly interested in your paper.

Judy Wakabayashi, Japan

We have had several requests for more material on living in Japan. Can any of our subscribers help please.

We learn by our mistakes and sometimes hearing about the mistakes of others can teach us something. With this hope I am writing about my experience with my daughter.

Ten years ago, when my daughter was three months old, we moved to Holland. I am English, but my husband is Dutch and he wanted to return to his own country. On arrival I couldn't speak a work of Dutch, but I wanted to learn. A problem for native English speakers who wish to practise their first faltering words of Dutch is that the vast majority of the Dutch can speak English and are happier to practise their English than to bear with one's clumsy attempts at their language.

To be honest, it wasn't a conscious decision, but I started speaking Dutch to my daughter. She was an ideal audience. At first I used single words when addressing her, and by the time she was a toddler my Dutch had improved to the necessary level of communication. So we carried on until she started nursery school at the age of four. She heard little English as although my husband and I speak English together he always has spoken to the children in his native tongue.

One day my daughter's teacher asked if I always spoke English to my daughter. Surprised, I replied that I always spoke Dutch. A long discussion followed. The teacher felt it was a terrible shame that I hadn't spoken my mother tongue with my child. One of the parents out of the class was a language expert, and he believes that it is always better for a parent to use their mother tongue with their child, as one can express deep-seated emotions which are comprehensible to a small child in the language one used when one was a child oneself. Also my Dutch was far from fluent and my daughter had picked up some of my mistakes.

So I switched to speaking English to her, and I have always spoken English to my son who is seven. At first my daughter found it difficult, but I persisted. Now both children understand English well. They can also speak it, but they only use it when someone who does not understand Dutch is being addressed. I don't insist they speak English to me, as they know I understand Dutch and I would feel our communication would be less spontaneous as a consequence.

We visit England once a year and I read English as well as Dutch books to them. Suddenly this summer my daughter found she could read books in English, although I have never attempted to teach her, being too frightened of confusing her.

I realise that English is a language to which they will be much exposed anyway, and I can understand people who speak a less widely used language worrying more about their children not using it.

Rose Berl, Amsterdam

SOME ANSWERS TO YOUR QUERIES

I am married to a German, have a little girl just four, with whom we have always spoken German at home. I read the Newsletter avidly – it encourages me in what I am hoping to achieve and it is a great comfort to know that there are families in the same or similar situations who may be experiencing and overcoming the same difficulties.

In one edition I read a letter from a reader who advocated 'refusing to understand' if the child addressed one in the 'wrong' language. This horrified me. It will surely only lead to stammering and self-consciousness? I would *never* consider *pretending* to my daughter that I do not understand English! I would think the only effect it would have on her would be total mutiny!

Anne Bödiger, Darlington, England

That is, of course, your decision and may be appropriate in your own case. However, you may be viewing this matter in far too harsh a light. What many parents do when they 'refuse to understand', or perhaps better expressed as 'pretend not to understand', is much less draconian than you fear. Firstly, this strategy should not be used until children are conscious that they are dealing with two separate language systems and aware that there are two ways of saying almost everything; most children will have reached this stage by or shortly after their second birthday. Secondly, this pretending not to understand has to be done in moderation (i.e. *occasionally,* not every single time a child uses the 'wrong' language) and with some sensitivity (i.e. ceasing when the child shows distress). If the distress is caused by the child's being unable or finding it difficult to express something in the 'right' language, supply the word or phrase he or she needs. Another possibility is to prompt a response in the 'right' language as in the following example from my own family:

(Thomas, aged 3;5, was talking to me about a girl who had cut her arm.)

George: Wer hat ihren Arm verbunden? *(Who bandaged her arm?)*

Thomas: Her mother, Dad. Her mummy and daddy.

George: Oh, ihre – *(her)* (Expecting Thomas to complete.)

Thomas: Mutter und ihr Vater. *(Mother and her father)*

These procedures can be very effective in encouraging a child to use the 'right' language to the right people and need not be traumatic.

To some people, of course, this may seem cruel, but is it really? The language behaviour of most children, be they bilingual or monolingual, is regulated in some way by their parents. For example, a parent my well pretend not to understand a child who says 'Give me a drink!', responding with 'I beg your pardon?', indicating that a request such as 'Could I have a drink, please?' would be preferred. In my own case I found it more difficult to get Thomas to remember to put a 'please' on the end of requests than to speak only German to me!

In her book *The Sun is Feminine* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1983), Traute Taeschner describes how she used the technique in question to increase her daughters' output in German. The family was living in Italy and Traute spoke German, her husband Italian, to the girls. The following excerpts describe her experiences:

When Lisa and Giulia were about two or three, their mother ... began pretending not to understand most of what they said in Italian. When they spoke to her in German, she answered immediately and fulfilled their desires. But when they spoke to her in Italian, she answered *Wie bitte?* ('I beg your pardon?'), or *Was hast du gesagt?* ('What did you say?), or simply *Was? Wie?* ('What?'). In the beginning, the children thought their mother was merely a bit deaf and would repeat the same words at a louder pitch, sometimes even shouting. But their mother would cover her ears and ask *Wie?* ('What?') again, so the girls began to replace their shouting with the use of equivalents. (p. 200)

When they saw that their wishes would be fulfilled if they spoke German, the girls quickly realized that their mother's *Wie?* ('What?') meant only that they were to switch languages. After a while, in order to avoid having to say the same thing twice, they began to speak to her directly in German. (p. 201)

However, Lisa and Giulia were not always willing to accept their mother's strategy unconditionally. And of course some moments were more opportune than others for using it. For instance, it was not used when the girls were telling about things they had experienced almost totally and/or very frequently in the other language. Although they usually were not patient enough to describe to their mother things that had happened to them at nursery school, and often responded to her questions with a laconic *nichts* ('nothing'), this was not due to bilingualism. Monolingual children also often have no desire to talk about school, and answer in the same way. On days when something interesting had happened at school, Lisa and Giulia enthusiastically began to tell about it. Here, it was found that a dry interruption of their euphoria with a metalinguistic *Was?* ('What?') did not give good results. Usually the girls stopped, used one or two German words and several 'ahs' and 'uhms', and then either continued the story in Italian, dropped it altogether, or, most frequently, got irritated and gave vent to their nervousness with expressions of malcontent.

The *Wie?* ('What?') strategy is ineffective when the subject carries emotive connotations. When the child is relaxed and happy or when there's no hurry, the interraction is not compromised or disturbed by the brief *Wie?* interruption. But if the child is crying because s/he is unsatisfied, anxious, or angry, or if s/he is in a state of euphoria, the *Wie?* interruption is an indication that the parent is more interested in the child's language than in his or her unease, or that his or her participation in the child's joy must pass through the filter of the language that has been used. Children do not like this type of behaviour, and express their dislike by clearly rejecting the tactic. If children have a problem, parents must understand them or they will only be adding one more problem. Children's small problems demand immediate solutions, and any attempt to put them off only makes children more impatient than they already are.

The *Wie?* tactic is less likely to succeed in interactions where it is primarily the adult who is interested in the conversation. But when the child is the more interested participant, this strategy is at its best.

The *Wie?* tactic also proved inadvisable when the group included other people who spoke only Italian. For example:

> Lisa is at the table with her parents and paternal grandparents. Her mother interrupts her Italian to ask, *Wie?*
> **Lisa** (age 4;6): Io parlo a tutti. *(I'm speaking to everyone).*
> (p.205)

This question has been covered in some detail because it is an important one and one that is frequently raised. We would be very interested to hear readers' personal experiences with this pretending-not-to-understand strategy.

Veronica Peirce, one of our Advisory Board members who lives in France, makes some interesting remarks on a closely related issue:

> My experience is that one *does* have to remind children to speak the 'other' language in the home. If I had not nagged and insisted on this point, I am fairly sure my children (aged seven and ten) would quickly have taken to speaking French in the home, to each other (which they do quite a bit anyway) and to my husband and me, in spite of the fact that we talk English both to each other and to the children. It is the natural and easy way out after a day at French school. I am convinced, however, that in a dominantly French environment, maintaining English as the language of the home is essential to maintaining an easy use of the language by the children. As anyone who's tried it will know, it's not always easy . . .!

We are grateful to Traute Taeschner and Springer-Verlag for permission to quote from *The Sun is Feminine.*

I would like to raise a question I have been unable to find an adequate answer to. I am English, my wife Japanese and we are living in Japan. We have a son who is now two years old. I speak English to him and my wife Japanese. At the moment my wife and I speak both Japanese and English to each other, but we are not really sure exactly how we should be talking to each other to avoid confusing our son. I'd be grateful if you could give us some advice.

Ian Fallman, Tokyo, Japan

It is very unlikely that your son will be confused by what you are doing. If you continue to speak consistently to your son in English and your wife addresses him consistently in Japanese, he will be encouraged to speak to you in English and to his mother in Japanese. Of course, at his present age don't expect him to keep his two languages absolutely separate – this will occur more and more as he grows older. In your son's case, since you are living in Japan, English will most likely be his 'weaker' language, the one which will need most attention from you. So give all your son's efforts in English encouragement and be generous with your praise.

The fact that his parents use both languages to speak to each other should not trouble your son. He will most likely just accept that this is what is done in his family.

FUN WITH WORDS

Anne Hall has a large table cloth with 'Happy Birthday' embroidered on it in several different languages. She would like to add more languages to it and would be pleased to receive 'Happy Birthday' in your language (clearly written please) to be included on it.

Contact details removed

We have named out baby Anglo-Italian son Stephen, but we generally call him the Italian Stefano. I myself think of him more as Stefano than Stephen, and I don't feel this is any different to calling a James Jimmy or a Catherine Kate. I'd be interested in your comments especially as we already note that many Italians around us like to say Stephen, whilst my own English family and friends have readily accepted the name Stefano. Thus he will not simply be Stefano in Italian and Stephen in English. Does it matter?

Christopher Hogan, Brescia, Italy

No, it shouldn't matter at all. Eventually a pattern of some sort will no doubt be established so that your son will be called Stephen by some people, Stefano by others. He himself may show some particular preference as he grows older which will influence his family's and friends' way of addressing him.

Please send your queries, answers and/or contributions to George Saunders at either of the two addresses below:

Contact details removed

CONTACTS

If you wish your name and address to be included in the Contact section, please send us the following information:

Name, address, languages spoken in the family, Children's birth dates and specification of the type of families with whom you would like to get in touch.

Contact details removed

If you do not already subscribe to the Bilingual Family Newsletter use the form below to enter a subscription for the next four issues. The same form should be used to buy any of the books advertised in this issue.

If you know of any other bilingual families please help to secure the future of this publication by entering their address on the form and we will send them a free sample of a recent issue.

To: Multilingual Matters Ltd,
Bank House, 8a Hill Rd,
Clevedon, Avon,
England, BS21 7HH

March 1985

From: NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

TOWN .....

COUNTRY ..... **POST CODE** .....

☐ **Please enter a subscription to BFN. £3.30. Overseas £3.50 (US$5.00).**

☐ **Please send a copy of Young Children in China. £8.90 (US$13.50).**

☐ **Remittance enclosed for £/$** .....

☐ **Please charge my Access/Master/Euro Card**

Card No. .....

Signature .....

☐ **Please send a sample copy of BFN to:**

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

TOWN .....

COUNTRY ..... **POST CODE** .....

Contact details removed

Published by Multilingual Matters Ltd, Bank House, 8a Hill Rd, Clevedon, Avon, England, BS21 7HH.
Typeset by Wayside Graphics, Clevedon, England. Printed by Colourways Press Ltd, Clevedon, England.