The Bilingual Family Newsletter

MULTILINGUAL MATTERS

Editor:
George Saunders **MARCH 1987 VOLUME 4 No. 1**

EDITORIAL

With this issue we begin the fourth year of our Newsletter. We are grateful to all those who have supported us by subscribing, writing contributions, making suggestions, etc. We hope we can continue to maintain readers' interest by covering as many aspects of children's bilingualism as possible. The number of new subscriptions dropped off somewhat towards the end of 1986, so any assistance which readers could give in recruiting new subscribers would be most welcome and would ensure the viability of the Newsletter.

In this issue we have an informative article on the World-wide Education Service which should be of considerable interest to English-speaking parents in non-English-speaking countries who would like their children to receive part of their education through English. If readers know of any similar service offered in other languages please let us know and we will mention it in a future issue of the Newsletter.

George Saunders

MOROCCO: WHERE BILINGUALISM IS THE NORM

Abdelâli Bentahila

(Abdelâli Bentahila is a member of our Advisory Board who has had life-long experience with bilingualism. Born in Fez in Morocco, he was educated bilingually in French and Arabic. He later specialised in English, and has taught it at a variety of levels; he has also had experience teaching French and Arabic. He obtained his Ph.D. in another bilingual setting, at the University of Wales, for an interdisciplinary study of Arabic-French bilingualism, drawing on linguistics, psychology and sociology. His book *Langauge Attitudes Among Arabic-French Bilinguals in Morocco* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1983) is a most interesting examination of the importance of bilinguals' attitudes to their languages and discusses the ways in which these attitudes may be reflected in and influence the way the languages are used and the bilingual's view of the world. At present Abdelâli is a lecturer in linguistics in the English Department of University Mohamed Ben Abdellah in Morocco.)

The Bilingual Family Newsletter receives a large number of queries from parents all over the world who are wondering whether or not it is advantageous for their children to be bilingual. Research in this field is bringing more and more evidence that bilingualism is an asset allowing children to have access to two enriching cultures. Successful bilingualism depends on various socio-psychological factors, including parents' attitudes to the two languages and cultures on the one hand and the whole community's attitudes on the other. As a case in point, we may consider the situation in Morocco, which, like many other countries, is what we might call a naturally bilingual country. In Morocco, bilingualism is regarded as something perfectly ordinary, natural and commonplace; it is taken for granted that children will be exposed to several languages, and most parents probably never even consider the question of whether this may pose psychological or educational problems for their child.

The original language spoken by the indigenous inhabitants of Morocco was Berber. There are now three main dialects of Berber spoken in Morocco: Tashelhait, spoken in the south-west, Tamazight, spoken in the Atlas mountains, and Tarifit in the north. Speakers of one of these dialects may have considerable difficulty in understanding speakers of the others. In the seventh century, the Arabs invaded Morocco from the east, bringing with them the Arabic language which is today the official language of Morocco. Accordingly, Moroccans today acquire as their first language either one of the Berber dialects or Moroccan Arabic, Berber being used mainly in the mountainous and countryside areas, while Moroccan Arabic is the first language of most city dwellers. Children who acquire Berber at home, however, are usually almost simultaneously exposed to Moroccan Arabic outside the home, and thus become Berber-Arabic bilinguals as a matter of course at a very early age. Those who acquire Moroccan Arabic as their mother tongue, however, do not usually learn Berber at all, simply because they have no need to; they have no problem in communicating with Berber speakers through the medium of Moroccan Arabic.

Neither Moroccan Arabic nor Berber has any standard written form, so as soon as children begin their education they are obliged to begin learning another language, Classical Arabic. At kindergartens and Koranic schools they learn the Arabic alphabet, verses from the Koran (the holy book of Islam) and songs. At the age of six or seven they begin primary school using Classical Arabic as the medium of instruction. Moroccan Arabic and Classical Arabic are related varieties, but nevertheless there are considerable differences between the two. Children thus have to cope with learning new sounds, a new set of vocabulary and new

Continued on page two

rules of grammar at the same time as they are learning to read and write. Attitudes to the two varieties of Arabic are also very different; Classical Arabic is prized as the prestigious language, felt to be rich, beautiful and sacred, whereas Moroccan Arabic, though obviously indispensable for everyday communication, tends to be looked down on as the language associated with uneducated people. Moroccan bilinguals' attitudes towards their languages have been investigated by means of various techniques which are described in detail in my book, *Language Attitudes among Arabic-French Bilinguals in Morocco.*

In the third year of primary school Moroccan children begin to learn French (they may well already have been exposed to this language to some extent, through children's television programmes, kindergarten activities, or otherwise hearing French used around or to them). The presence of French in Morocco is of course due to the fact that between 1912 and 1956 Morocco was a French protectorate (with the exception of the extreme north of the country, which was under Spanish control and where Spanish fulfilled the functions performed by French in the rest of the country). During the Protectorate, Morocco adopted the French system of education, and French was also the major language of administration. Since independence, a process called Arabisation has gradually led to a reduction in the use of French as well as in Classical Arabic. This knowledge of French opens up new horizons for our Berber, Moroccan Arabic and Classical Arabic speakers, giving them access to the culture of Europe as well as that of the Arab world.

Becoming proficient in French represents a considerable learning task for the Moroccan child, given that French is entirely unrelated to any of the languages he already knows, and even its writing system is quite different from that of Arabic, which he is just beginning to master. This situation may result in children being rather confused for a certain period of time. For example, I have seen a child in the early stages of learning French attempting to write it from right to left across the page; this is of course because he was used to writing Arabic in this way. Such difficulties are, however, of the developmental type and they are usually overcome by the end of primary education. Children are generally encouraged in their learning of French by positive attitudes on the part of their parents, even if the latter have never learnt French themselves.

In secondary school, Moroccan children continue to study both French and Arabic, but at the age of 16 or 17 they embark on the learning of yet another language, which may be English, Spanish or German. Those who wish to may continue to study one of these languages at university level, and at the end of a degree course in English, say, Moroccan students are able to speak English as fluently as they speak French or Classical Arabic.

It can be seen, then, that by adulthood a Moroccan may have acquired a high level of proficiency in three, four or five languages. It is, for instance, commonplace to find a Moroccan from the north who acquired Berber and Moroccan Arabic in infancy and learnt Classical Arabic, French and Spanish later on, and continues to use all five languages in his everyday life. Even a Moroccan who has never been to school may be bilingual in Berber and Moroccan Arabic and have some familiarity with Classical Arabic because of its use for religious purposes. It should by now be easy to understand why bilingualism in Moroccan society is nothing remarkable, but is felt to be the normal state of affairs. The reason why a single individual may go on using a number of languages side by side is that each language is found to have its own role to play in the individual's life.

A Moroccan bilingual is constantly, though usually unconsciously, making choices as to which language to use in a particular situation. In many situations he also has the possibility of using what has been called code-switching, in which he switches back and forth between, say, Arabic and French in the course of a single conversation, often mixing the two within the same sentence. This variety too seems to have its own rules and its own function, being associated with a casual, relaxed kind of atmosphere. I myself, for instance, will find myself, in the course of a single day, using Moroccan Arabic when shopping, French when chatting to colleagues, a mixture of French and Arabic to my brothers, and English to my wife or my students. Similarly, during the day I may write a report in Classical Arabic and a letter to a friend in French, read newspapers in both these languages and watch a film in English. Such factors as the nature of one's addressee, the topic under discussion and the kind of setting or place one finds oneself in all seem to have an effect on which language is chosen (see Bentahila, 1983).

An important conclusion one can draw from the Moroccan situation is that, for bilingualism to flourish, each of the languages involved should have its own distinctive role to play in the lives of those learning it. Moroccans cope happily with three, four or five languages in everyday use because each of these languages has its own value for them, its own usefulness, its own identity. If one language merely duplicated the functions of another, it would probably be quite readily abandoned. Parents who aim to make their children bilingual or multilingual, then would, in my opinion, be well advised to keep this point in mind. They should try to ensure that each language offers their children something they need, gives them access to something they will value, and makes some particular contribution to their lifestyle. It is in this way that parents can ensure, not only that their children learn more than one language, but also that each language is treasured and maintained in use.

BILINGUAL HUMOUR

For English-Japanese partnerships - a cautionary tale.

Cartoon has been removed from this space

My boys Toshi (4) and Hiro (2 ½) always laugh uproariously at the chorus of the story "The Three Little Pigs". Only recently I have learned that *chin-chin* (as in "Little pig, little pig, let me come in." "No, no, not by the hair of my chinny . . .") is Japanese baby talk for 'penis'!

Barbara Suzuki, Manila

A BRITISH-STYLE EDUCATION OVERSEAS

Angela Magness

The World-wide Education Service of the PNEU (Parents' National Educational Union) is a registered charity which for nearly a century has been involved in the education of English-speaking expatriates all over the world. And it really is world-wide. There are families in over 120 different countries using WES Home-School to educate their own children, including some on boats sailing the high seas. There are schools using our services in countries as far apart as South Korea and the Gabon, Saudi Arabia and Papua New Guinea. Also, teachers from every continent attended our annual conference in 1985.

Home-School

The most usual way in which WES helps to educate English-speaking expatriates is by Home-School. As the name suggests, this involves parents – usually the mother – in teaching their own children, using WES programmes and supported by a qualified, experienced teacher based in WES London offices. WES tutors, as they are called, provide termly assessments of each pupil's performance and are on hand for as much advice and guidance as is needed. WES Home-School caters for children aged 5 to thirteen and is fully endorsed by the Department of Education and Science.

Single Subject Courses

When children attend local schools abroad, it may be that certain subjects are either not included in the curriculum or are inadequately covered compared to UK standards. In such cases WES is able to help by providing single subject Home-School programmes with the same tutorial back-up as is provided when children follow a programme across the curriculum. The subjects available in this way are English, Mathematics, the Humanities and Science, of which the most popular are undoubtedly English and Mathematics. WES has pupils enrolled in its English course in places as far apart as France and Kota Kinabalu in East Malaysia.

An alternative reason for using a single subject Home-School course is simply to maintain a child's knowledge of, say, British History, when he or she is to be living abroad permanently.

WES also has an excellent Environmental Science programme. This takes the form of a series of assignments and is called 'Starting from a Walk'. Its aim is to encourage children to look around them in whatever country they may find themselves and to take advantage of foreign surroundings to broaden their experience. 'Starting from a Walk' requires children to make a regular walk near home and to observe and record what they see. The series of assignments for children to carry out after the walk include simple experiments like germinating seeds, tasting, smelling, recording cloud cover – all aimed at fostering an understanding of the environment.

Nursery School

WES' most recent venture is the development of a structured two year nursery education course called, 'Learning to Learn'. On their travels WES staff identified a need, particularly among Home-School families, for sound educational material to use with children of pre-school age. As well as being for individual families, 'Learning to Learn' is also ideal for nursery groups – both new groups and already existing groups – who would welcome a structured programme together with professional support and advice.

Written by an experienced nursery teacher and senior lecturer in Early Childhood Education, 'Learning to Learn' comes in two parts, one for each year of the course. The first part is designed to develop those skills necessary for all later learning, namely communication, physical, discrimination, social and attentional skills. Part two deals more specifically with preparation for school.

'Learning to Learn' is based on a series of activity sheets which involves teaching all the important areas of curriculum around interesting topics, such as People in Rhymes, Homes and Families, Celebrations – and, of course, the ever-fascinating All About Me!

Bilingual Families

Whilst all WES programmes are in English, by no means are all those using them British. The very first Home-School family visited by our director, Hugh Boulter, was in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. The mother was Iranian, the father Somali, they had met in Copenhagen and their only common language was English! Ten-year-old Maria did extremely well with Home-School, going on to achieve nine 'A' grades at GCE Ordinary level.

Although Maria's family was unusual, this example serves to demonstrate the adaptability of WES programmes to different situations.

Other examples include Dutch children who attended a British International School abroad and on their return to the Netherlands turned to Home-School in order to keep up their English. Finally, in Papua New Guinea there is a family with a Nigerian father and Trinidadian mother; where all the children have been educated by Home-School over a period of 15 years.

Establishing Schools

WES is involved in establishing schools for English-speaking expatriate children. Sometimes, as in Alexandria and Seoul, they are English-speaking schools serving a largely British community. In other cases they are set up for a specific project. For example, we have a school in Northern Iraq on a large German-Italian hydro-electric project and – one of our most recent ventures – we have just started a school in India for GEC who are building a conventional power station.

Affiliation covers all aspects of setting up and maintaining a school, from advising on its location and design, through to recruiting teachers and providing curriculum, books and materials. Once a school is in operation, WES affiliation ensures that high standards are maintained by regular assessments, monitoring and annual advisory visits. If any specific problems occur, WES has a team of specialist consultants available to deal with them.

Servicing Existing Schools

WES has developed a wide range of support services for established British-style schools overseas. WES is unique in having close links with both private and state sectors of education in the UK, as well as first hand experience of the background and needs of schools overseas – both those with a predominantly British curriculum and those with an international curriculum.

Essentially this is consultancy work: inspection, school-based in-service training, the recruitment and secondment

Continued on page four

of teaching staff. For inspections and in-service training we tend to use currently serving local authority staff – advisers and in some cases college lecturers – but occasionally retired HMI and head teachers.

Our work for established schools has included inspections of Jeddah Preparatory, Saudi Arabia and Tanglin infant and junior schools, Singapore as well as many others. WES has organised a wide range of school-based in-service training programmes, such as Mathematics at St Christopher's School, Bahrain and several schools in the United Arab Emirates and the Use of Computers in Primary Education in Brunei and Manila.

An important aspect of our work for established schools involves keeping teachers up-to-date with new developments in classroom practice in the UK. Every July WES runs a residential conference for teachers from overseas schools. This combines three or four days intensive in-service training with an opportunity for teachers from schools in many different locations to exchange ideas. WES also supplies a termly mailing service to teachers, consisting of interesting and stimulating publications on all aspects of education. In addition, a Video Education Magazine for teachers, issued three times a year, focusses on current educational debates, developments and innovations and draws examples from contemporary classroom practice in both primary and secondary schools.

As an organisation WES is constituted as a non-profit making educational charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is thus governed by a Council of Trustees.

Members of Council cover a wide range of educationalists including four head teachers, a chief education officer and two college principals, representatives of the British Council and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and those with experience of working overseas. WES has two assessors: a staff inspector for primary education from Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the chief adviser from a local education authority. Its presidents are the Countess Mountbatten of Burma and her husband, Lord Brabourne.

If anyone is interested in knowing more about us or has any queries about the education of English-speaking expatriates please write to:

The Director
World-wide Education Service

Contact details removed

HELP!!!

Mrs Irma Roberts, University of Leicester, is doing a dissertation on **The Acquisition of Language of German/English Bilingual Children,** age 0-7 years. All German-/English bilingual families willing to answer her ques-

Contact details removed

BILINGUAL FAMILIES IN JAPAN

Sue Neill

The first thing that strikes even the casual visitor to Japan is that it is a totally different cultural experience. Attitudes to many everyday things are quite different from those in the West. Of relevance here are the attitudes to child-rearing (small children are indulged much more) and education (there is excessive pressure to get on the right 'educational escalator' to ensure a successful position in this competitive society). Historically Japan had been closed and isolated for 300 years before 'modernisation' started at the end of the last century. In spite of recent 'internationalisation' attempts, xenophobia still persists. Outside the big cities a foreigner still often attracts amazed stares and pointing fingers. The Japanese are very homogeneous as a race, the emphasis is on everyone fitting in and doing the same thing. Society and business are based on the principle of 'harmony', so anyone/anything which doesn't conform is regarded with apprehension. They might rock the boat, and with a population of 120 million crowded into an area smaller than the state of California (less than half the area of New South Wales) there isn't much room for rocking.

So bilingualism in Japan often means biculturalism as well, and where the culture gap is so wide, the linguistic problems are often relegated to second place. There are as many ways of adjusting to biculturalism in Japan as there are bicultural families. Perhaps the most relevant point is that a foreigner is always 'different' over here, and to be 'different' goes against Japanese society's strongest characteristic. However much non-Japanese may want and try to fit in, it is impossible. There are positive and negative aspects to being 'different', and we who live here have to concentrate very hard on the positive ones.

We are a fairly typical bicultural family. I came from England to Japan eight years ago as an English teacher, met my Japanese husband and stayed. We have a three year old and a baby, so are just starting to make choices in the bicultural game. My Japanese is not fluent; my husband's English is. We both speak our own language to the children. The three year old speaks both, depending on the face he's addressing, and the baby absorbs both. What follows is an assessment of the approaching problems as we seem them, and our ideas. These ideas are by no means solutions, we are quite prepared to change them, and by maintaining a 'mobile defence' we hope to get the best of both worlds.

The biggest hurdle as seen by many bilingual/bicultural families is the education system; whether to opt for the Japanese one or one of the foreign ones. Problems with the Japanese educational system, especially at secondary level, are the excessive competition, examination pressure at every stage, large classes (50+), and teaching methods. The norm is that the teacher stands and talks and the students listen and absorb. They are not encouraged to ask questions or actively participate. Non-academic subjects are often excluded from the curriculum and have to be done in after school hours in clubs and societies. Even here there is a lot of pressure from the group to join in and conform. This is a very rough and ready synopsis of the Japanese education system.

Much has been published about it in the West recently. From the standpoint of the bicultural family it would seem important to decide how much the children are going to be required to fit into Japanese society as they grow older. Given that a foreigner can never 'belong' totally in this society, some families opt out of the system early on.

Foreign-style education is available in most of the big cities. There are often several English-speaking schools, and sometimes German, French and Scandinavian ones too.

Continued on page five

Problems here are the vast expense if it is not borne by the father's company, and the isolation from the predominant culture of the country, lending to a 'ghetto' mentality. Many bicultural families where the mother is Japanese and the father foreign have the problem that the children aren't exposed enough to the foreign language when they are small, and therefore the foreign language is weak or non-existant verbally. Attendance at a foreign school corrects this.

The harder task is for the foreign mother where the father is Japanese. Although the children are exposed to the foreign language when they are small, Japanese takes over when they go to school, play with friends or see their local grandparents and relatives. Trips abroad for language reinforcement are expensive from here, and not often possible every year. In Mother and Toddler groups the children usually interact in Japanese because it is the common language – mothers are usually from a variety of European and English-speaking countries.

The attitude of the father is crucial in this situation. If he is really prepared to co-operate in experiments with bilingualism, there is a chance. Often Japanese fathers are too busy at work and their own leisure activities to spend the necessary time with their families.

We anticipate that the pre-school stage will probably be the easiest for us, as there is a limited exposure to biculturalism. To reinforce the fact that there are lots of children in the same situation as ours, we get together once a week with other non-Japanese mothers and their children. There is no formal instruction, and in fact the children usually interact in Japanese, as it is the common language. On the other side, the local Japanese children feel free to come round to our house and play, and making friends at an early age will hopefully cushion the blow when it becomes apparent to our children that they are 'different'. So far the neighbours have shown envy for our bilingual son, their children want to play with him, and ask him to translate when non-Japanese-speaking children are visiting. So far we have seen none of the problems of discrimination. Maybe we are lucky in our choice of neighbourhood.

I don't at the moment have a job myself, and the hidden advantage of that is that we speak English all day at home. We are also lucky in that the children and I get home to England once a year, usually for about six weeks. It's amazing how much reinforcement that provides. We hope to continue this, but wonder how easy it will be when the children are at school, time is limited, and other attractions compete. The other plan is to go home to England for an extended stay sometime when the eldest child is five. This would enable him to attend either pre-school or the first term or so of infant school, before returning to Japan where they start primary school at age six. This obviously depends on many things, not least the amount of disruption it causes to the children themselves. As far as pre-school in Japan is concerned, we wish an international kindergarten were available in our area, as it would avoid the regimentation of the Japanese ones and would continue the use of English. But as it isn't we are planning on investigating a Montessori kindergarten nearby, run in Japanese.

The children will then go to Japanese primary school, as we want them to become literate in Japanese and as far as possible to merge in with the local children. I will teach them to read and write in English. The Early Learning Centre in England has all sorts of interesting materials, though they don't as yet do mail-order. I intend to keep this as informal as possible, centred around their books and letters to England. I don't expect them to be as proficient as their peers in England. This arrangement is easier than the other way round, as Japanese is a much more difficult language to learn to read and write.

The proviso to all this is that the children are happy with the arrangement, and don't get victimised by other children for being 'different'. If that happens, we are quite prepared to transfer to England. The problem then would be that it would be much more difficult to maintain the Japanese language there than it is to maintain the English language here. Also – and very important – it is very hard indeed to join the Japanese education system in mid-stream, whereas it would be much easier to join the English one. By being in Japan at least for primary education, we feel we are giving the widest possible scope.

Secondary level is where the real choice appears – or so it seems to us. As the Japanese education system stands at the moment, I would not be happy to see my children go through it. My husband does not feel so extreme and feels that the home environment and parents' attitudes will compensate. Given that our children will never fit into this society, there seems little point in competing to get on the right 'educational escalator' which ensures a good position in society at the end. The system may change and expand before our children reach that stage. We may find out interesting options available as our children develop – so far we don't know what talents they have. But if we decide to go to England, it will very likely be at this stage. By that time the children themselves should have a large say in the matter and a lot will depend on where they feel happier. It will be a very difficult balance to preserve between what they want with their limited experience and what we want for them with our cultural prejudices.

Only recently have large numbers of Western foreigners (the Japanese word means 'outside person') started living in Japan, so the whole concept of bilingualism and international families is a new one. It is easy to be negative and to see insurmountable obstacles for these families, but if one starts from the assumption that it is not possible to totally fit into this society, all sorts of interesting possibilities open up. To be bilingual is to be 'different' and being 'different' goes against the whole culture. Children need a lot of support, courage, self-confidence and reinforcement to be 'different' here. The reward for their efforts is that they stand to gain the best of both worlds.

We are eternally optimistic; people who contract international marriages usually are. We're sure that bilingualism will be achieved, and hope that our attempts at biculturalism produce 'international' human beings and not 'cultureless' ones.

THE FIFTH NORDIC CONFERENCE ON BILINGUALISM

Will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, **from 22nd to 25th June 1987.** Multilingual Matters Ltd. will have a book exhibition there and are hoping to organise a meeting between bilingual families in the area and the experts at the conference. Please let us know if you would be interested in such a meeting and we will inform you the time and the place if such a meeting is organised.

SOME ANSWERS TO YOUR QUERIES

An acquaintance gave me a copy of *The Bilingual Family Newsletter,* and with this letter I would like to begin a subscription.

Recently I have been wrestling with a problem that I would be grateful to have your advice on, in the hope of solving it. Indeed, there is no one I know here whom I could ask to give me the benefit of either their professional or personal experience.

Both my husband and I are American and we have been living in Japan for ten years. Although we now live in a small city, for more than seven years we lived in a small mountain village.

When we came to Japan our eldest daughter was six years old; she spoke English, of course, learned Japanese without difficulty, and continues to be bilingual. Although she went to public school in Japan from kindergarten through the last year of junior high school, she now attends a prep school in the United States.

The problem concerns our three other children, all of whom were born in Japan. They are now seven, four and two-and-a-half years old. Although they all understand English, they do not speak it. That is, they do not produce it spontaneously. They speak to their father and I in Japanese (we answer them in English) and speak to each other in Japanese too. They can "Parrot" English, produce words on demand, and the seven-year-old can even tell a simple story in English or sing a song, but it is not *their* language.

I am afraid my husband and I made the serious mistake of not insisting English be spoken at home, at the time not realizing the importance of raising children bilingually. In fact, our sphere was so small, there was once a time when we were concerned if they would learn Japanese.

Because our children attend Japanese elementary school and kindergarten, and have *no* English-speaking friends, I am not sure this situation can change. However, I am willing to do whatever I can to remedy this problem ... or stop worrying about it if you advise it is "too late" to do anything about it!

Although I am convinced that if we were to move to America they would begin to speak English in a relatively short period of time, the fact is, Japan is our permanent home. We will return to America for a month's visit next summer, and I have thought about the possibility of trying to make the visit longer (it would be difficult to make it longer than just a few months) so that they could attend a playgroup or school, and in other ways immerse them in English for a continuous period, in the hope of getting them to speak English to us at home when we returned to Japan.

Mrs H., Japan

Although it is probably little consolation, your problem is by no means unusal, as can be seen in the many letters we receive from various countries. I think the important thing is not to get too upset about the situation, but perhaps to try various strategies to encourage your children to speak to you in English. Firstly, you say that Japan is your permanent home and that all the children's playmates are Japanese. It would therefore be unrealistic to expect English to be their stronger, their dominant language, since that will obviously be Japanese. However, English *is* the language they hear from their parents and you suggest that they do understand everything you say to them in English; you also say that the seven-year-old can produce some English on demand. This is a very good foundation on which to build.

Your problem will be trying to break an established pattern - you speaking English to the children, but the children speaking Japanese to you. Psychologically this can be quite difficult for both children and parents. Only you can judge what effect an increasing insistence on the children speaking English to their parents will have on family harmony. With the two youngest children, the "pretending not to understand" strategy could be effective. If they persist with a Japanese utterance, you could "accept" it but supply the English equivalent. You will probably have to help them a fair bit, too, with English vocabulary and expressions which they may know passively but find difficult to recall actively. This can be frustrating for both parents and children initially, but if you do persist it is most likely that the amount of English they use will increase. Much will depend on your own and your children's temperament! If the children do respond positively to this, they may get into the habit of speaking predominantly English to you.

This may work, too, with the seven year old, although you could offer him explanations as to why you are doing it and why you think it is important that he speak English as well as Japanese. Praise the children's efforts to speak English and don't correct their English too much - constant correction may turn them off.

Simon Sanada, our Advisory Panel member in Japan, particularly favours games and "bribery" as means of encouraging English ("If you want a game of football, that's great, but it's got to be in English!") and says these are particularly enhanced if more English speakers can be included.

Any visits to America would certainly assist you very much in getting the children to speak more English, for there they will *have to* speak English outside the immediate family. Such visits, combined with your efforts within the family to encourage more use of English should have a good chance of success. The aid of your eldest daughter could also be enlisted.

Is there any chance of your occasionally meeting with other English speaking families in your area? If you could find even one other family prepared to have "English only" outings etc. this could prove very beneficial. It may not be so difficult to make such contacts. Simon Sanada estimates from recent government figures, for example, that there are over 50,000 native speakers of English resident in Japan (over 37,000 of them being North Americans. Simon Sanada has offered to compile and circulate a contact list of bilingual families in Japan if interested families would like to send him details. His address is Simon Sanada, 23 Koda Koda-cho, Nukata-gun, Aichi-ken, Japan 444-01.

In addition, as mentioned in the March 1986 issue of the *BFN,* readers living in or near Hamamatsu can contact a Special Interest Group on Multilingualism and International Schooling Support by writing to Gary Wood, 2-8-20 Nunohashi, Hamamatsu 432, Japan, or phoning him on 0534-56-1072. The group deals with a number of issues facing parents of expatriate and bicultural/bilingual children.

There are also other ways of exposing the children to English. Simon Sanada: "There are several TV programmes most evenings broadcast bilingually, and more imported American movies than anyone could possibly want to see."

It is hoped that some of the above suggestions are useful. If you are determined to succeed in getting your children to speak to you in English, you most probably will - but it will take time and patience! We wish you all the best in your endeavours.

I am writing for advice about bringing up our son in France. My husband and I are English, and our son, who was born in France, is two-and-half years old. We speak only English to him at home, but as he attends a crèche every day for the whole day he is speaking a lot more French than English. We want him to be bilingual, but we are worried that the two languages may confuse and keep him behind at school which he starts shortly at age three. We always answer him in English, but his sentences are 90% French. Our main concern is when he starts school, do we help him in French or English, bearing in mind that he will be taught reading and writing in French? Is it better to concentrate on one language at this moment or hope that he will sort out the two in his own mind? My husband speaks French well, but I am still in the process of learning.

Mrs Jane Oakes, Cognac, France

There is no evidence that acquiring two languages at an early age need keep children behind at school – on the contrary, your son will later certainly have an advantage over his schoolfellows if he becomes bilingual in English and French.

The fact that your son responds to your and your husband's English, even though 90% of his responses are in French, shows that he *understands* English. So do keep speaking to him in English so that his passive knowledge of English continues to develop. If you begin to answer him in French, even if only occasionally, the danger is that this will develop into a habit and before you know it no English will be used between parents and son.

If you are worried that he is not exposed to English enough, perhaps you could find another English speaking family, preferably with English speaking children, in your area whom you could meet regularly. Children's tapes and videos would also help.

However, to activate your son's passive knowledge of English and to get him to speak it more, activities (games etc.) where he is encouraged to use English are needed. Let him know how pleased you are, and how clever he is, when he speaks to you in English. Don't expect his English to be as good as his French, help him when he's groping for a word or struggling to express himself. He may find it difficult for a while since it seems that a pattern has been established where he speaks to you in French and knows that you understand him and accept his French. It is a matter of gradually changing this established pattern.

An occasional visit to England would immerse your son in English, and he would be obliged to speak English to play with other children.

You express concern that you have much less time with your son than he spends with French speakers, but Michael Clyne, one of our Advisory Board members in Australia, has some consolation to offer here. He reports that one of his doctoral students, Susanne Döpke,[1] has developed a convincing hypothesis, on the basis of case studies of bilingual children in Melbourne, that it is the *quality* (child-centredness) rather than quantity of exposure that counts most. Michael's own daughter, Joanna, now aged 6;0, was in a crèche several days a week from the age of three and a half months. At age four she was in an all-day kindergarten four days a week and at age five began school for five days a week. Michael's wife, Irene, speaks only English to Joanna, Michael speaks German to her all the time, and Michael and Irene communicate in English. Joanna is thus exposed to English more than your son is to French, yet she speaks German to Michael fluently and consistently, though with some grammatical mistakes.

As for your worries about schoolwork, they are possibly a little premature – in the French school system, learning to read and write doesn't really start until the *cours préparatoire,* at age six. By that time your son will be well on the way to mastering both languages. When the time comes for helping your son with his homework, it will obviously be a great help that your husband speaks French well, and probably by then your own French will also have improved. Even so, there is no need to abandon English when helping him with his homework. George Saunder's two sons (now aged 13 and 11) have over the years received a fair bit of help from him with homework problems. Although the homework itself has to be done in English, as they go to Australian schools, the actual discussion about it can be and is in German, e.g. a geography project. Only when it is a question of actual choice of English vocabulary, English spelling, etc., is English required, although even then this is only an insert into what is essentially a *German* conversation.

Their mother occasionally did the same thing in reverse when the boys attended a school in Hamburg for six months, i.e. she talked to them in English *about* their homework, using German words only when discussing how certain things could be best written down. The children, and parents, find this natural, and it never seems to have caused any confusion.

You mention that your son will be learning to read and write in English? This could be done before, at the same time as, or after learning to read and write in French. Evidence strongly suggests that there is very little confusion for children who regularly speak two languages. Being able to read and write English will expand the possibilities for your son's exposure to the language. You could teach your son to read yourself (see the July 1986 issue of the Newsletter for ideas on how to go about this), or you could seek assistance from an organisation such as the World-wide Education Service. (See the article on and the address of this service in this issue of the Newsletter.)

1. Döpke, Susanne (1986) Discourse Structures in Bilingual Families, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, Vo. 7. No. 6.

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

Contact details removed

c/o Multilingual Matters Ltd (see address on page 8)

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.

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 1987

From: NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

TOWN .....

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

☐ **Please enter a subscription to BFN. £3.70. Overseas £4.10 (US$7.50).**

☐ **Please send a copy of The Bilingual Family. £4.95**

☐ **Please send a copy of Raising Children Bilingually. £6.95**

☐ **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 Books, Clevedon, England. Printed by Colourways Press Ltd, Clevedon, England.