MULTILINGUAL MATTERS

The Bilingual Family Newsletter

Editor:
George Saunders

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EDITORIAL

I would like to thank all those readers in the USA who have already responded to our call for letters, articles, etc., from that part of the world. Some of these appear in this issue, and we hope to continue publishing US contributions in future issues.

Letters and contributions from all other countries are, of course, always welcome.

George Saunders

FRENCH FROM THREE AND A HALF IN A USUALLY MONOLINGUAL ENGLISH FAMILY

Marion Colledge

Marion Colledge was Lecturer in English as a Second Language at Bedford College of Higher Education, Bedfordshire, UK from 1978 to 1987

Like a number of mothers with a degree in a foreign language, I dreamed of bringing up Paul (born July 1981) bilingually as a baby, but when the time came it seemed unnatural. I had little knowledge of 'cuddly words' in any of my foreign languages: French, German or Italian.

There was no opportunity to go into depth with another language until Paul was three and a half, but being baby-sat by Punjabis and Italians and travelling sensitised him to the idea that people used other languages. By then I had read several French mother-and-baby magazines which gave me a better stock of vocabulary for this situation, and a maternity leave afforded me the free time and energy to put my idea of speaking another language into practice. I chose French because we went to France more often than to Germany or Italy. I started, genuinely not knowing whether the experiment would work or not.

Beginnings

From the start I decided to talk about or do things in French which my son normally enjoyed rather than setting out to teach vocabulary from picture dictionaries.

I capitalised on Paul's love of story books. I nearly always shortened and simplified them so that I only said one sentence for every picture. (This often meant looking at them beforehand.) Paul enjoyed these and commented as usual in English on the pictures: he was not far past the stage of hearing and enjoying stories in his mother tongue without fully understanding them. Stories have continued to be a great resource.

I then tried getting him to say please and thank you for favourite foods at table. This worked well, but later in France it had the infuriating consequence of him asking for an icecream at almost every street corner, knowing that if he asked in French he would be more likely to get it!

Going to France

I don't think I could have got very deep into French with Paul without our ten-day trips to France in February and July 1985. Paul was keenly interested in the environment and he did not object to me talking French to him which I did alongside English pointing out the things around us such as 'les poubelles' (dustbins), 'le metro' in the streets, and 'les dattes' (dates), 'les fromages' (cheeses) and 'le pain' (bread) in the shops.

We were lucky on our first visit to be staying with friends with a maternal nine-year-old daughter who played with Paul in her spare time. This was better than our next visit when we were to stay at the seaside flat of a retired teacher friend where he had to play with children of his own age whose social skills were, like his, immature.

Marion Colledge with Paul and his baby sister

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How I managed to keep up French with Paul in England

After February 1985 outside Paul's nursery hours I used as much French as possible for the next four months while still on leave. This probably amounted to about an hour and a half a day and included using French when we were out in parks (if no one else was around), and on family outings out of town (to the slight annoyance of my husband who with his rusty bookish French coped less well than did Paul).

Later on that year I made several attempts to ensure that Paul encountered French speech. He followed me to the (adult) French Club at my college; I had a French student to babysit, though he was reluctant to try out his French with her as opposed to with me, his mummy. I also arranged a meeting with another bilingual child (but we discovered the two had known each other at nursery and already communicated in English!).

The ways I used French myself

The first few months I tried to stick to the same sentences for a particular activity. I can't pretend this was effortless. I sometimes also forced myself to speak when I would have acted without speaking: e.g. 'donne la main, on traverse' (Hold my hand: we going to cross the road). It was quite boring to keep repeating things like: 'Attends!' (Wait!) and 'Vas-y!' (Go-on!) or to play ball games in French when I don't like them anyway.

As for getting him to speak himself, the first few weeks I only asked questions to which he had to answer 'Oui' or 'Non' e.g. 'Tu veux du cocacola?' Then I progressed to questions like: 'Tu veux du cocacola ou du lait?' (Do you want cocacola or milk?) so he only had to copy a word he'd just heard to answer 'Cocacola'. If he couldn't say something or didn't want to, I always said 'Shall I say it for you?'

I did the unorthodox thing of mixing the two languages and saying just part of a sentence in French when the whole thing might have been too complicated e.g. 'Do you remember "le lapin dans le metro?"' (the rabbit in the metro) referring to a transfer of a rabbit with fingers stuck in the door on Paris underground train doors. I was gradually able to use more and more French. Paul was never confused about what belonged to what language.

All little children remember nursery rhymes before they fully understand them, so we used the few I knew.

e.g. Fais dodo, Colin, mon petit frere,
Fais dodo, tu auras du lolot
(Go to sleep, Colin, little brother,
Go to sleep, you'll have some milk)

Here my judgement and experience as a language teacher came in. I got rid of the unusual word 'lolot' and used 'lait' even though it didn't rhyme, and altered it to include the name of Paul's baby sister, Ruth.

Fais dodo, Ruth, ma petite soeur,
Fais dodo, tu auras du lait

and later we sang 'un gateau' (a cake), 'des bonbons' (sweets), and 'un yaourt' (a yoghurt) instead of 'du lait'.

I was advised to buy records of the French children's songwriter, Anne Sylvestre, and these became favourites for many weeks. They echo the feelings of typical children who haven't got anyone to play with or who don't want to tidy up! Paul internalised lots from them though he never learned the words off pat.

A child learns much of his mother tongue in the context of routine activities and so it was too with Paul's French. We were told a nursery rhyme about a wolf for dressing time, and I found a rhyme from a Schtroumph (Smurf) book for bedtime. Some of Paul's personal habits such as his finger-sucking gave me a chance to say something over and over again. If I said 'Est-ce que tu te suces les doigts?' (Are you sucking your fingers?) He would take his fingers out of his mouth and say 'Non'. His involuntarily putting them back in again meant the question and answer could be repeated.

I used French ever so sparingly during Paul's floor play with trains and cars because when he was thus absorbed he was usually too busy 'brm-brming' to want to listen or talk to any one in any language. Paul did not play roles out loud as much as some children, but one role fitted in quite nicely with speaking French: he used to pretend to be a Leicester Foxcub bus in bed with Daddy who cooperated and sometimes had the bus going to France . . .

Paul's English was developing apace through exposure to children's TV programmes and I felt certain he'd enjoy television in French. It was difficult to obtain videos, but a friend sent me a full three-hour cassette. Out of this the only item he was interested in was a 'Bisounours' (Carebears) programme and his choice had to be respected.

Playing dominoes and picture ard games in French didn't work very well with my son who was too eager to finish quickly and win; other children might be more patient. On the linguistic side, comparing English and French words which sound similar didn't help much either (though it does now) because Pau hadn't reached the right age for it. When asked if 'tunnel' (Fr.) sounded like 'tunnel' (Engl.) Paul said 'No!'.

Dangerpoints

I found it necessary to avoid speaking French to Paul when he was tired or upset. It was so cold on our February 1985 trip to Paris that he cried at a 'toboggon' (slide) that he had enjoyed before, and he had to be taken into a 'bistro' for 'du chocolat chaud' (hot chocolate), and crossing the windswept 'Place des Fetes' pleaded to go home to England. I nearly overstepped the mark on our next trip when he became very tired with the heat and the sea and he responded with, 'Mummy, why does everyone speak French here?' and 'I don't want to speak French'. We also had a very awkward relationship with our hostess who took a dislike to Paul because he refused to wear a sunhat she'd bought, or to kiss her in the morning (cultural), he swung on a sliding gate, squealed with delight with the children in the yard and accidentally fell on a concealed wall socket! The situation was redeemed by the arrival of the lady's daughter who spoke some English and provided some fun.

Results and developments

Just after the end of that nearly disastrous visit to France, Paul began to understand more and he responded well (though usually in English) to many French instructions and questions. There were gaps like when a lady asked him how old he was and it had never cropped up before! As for speaking, first he started to put on a mock French accent and sometimes also went back to babytalk as if it were French. Believing in Stephen Krashen's theory of the 'silent period' during which the child is supposed to be absorbing language I did not feel deterred. Then just after that trip Paul started spontaneously replying 'Oui' and 'Non' when I spoke French to him. This and other short phrases spoken in a near-native accent have become part of his natural repertoire. Only now at six has be begun to be able to copy (not yet spontaneously use) whole sentences of normal length. I certainly had no idea when I began that there would be such a gap between his ability to understand and his ability to talk.

Originally I was afraid that some of Paul's friends might have thought he was funny for knowing French, but this fear was unfounded: the school he started to attend at five had many Italian and Asian children and respected languages other than English. Apart from when he is with his Grandpa and has to pretend to be anti-French, only once has Paul reacted to the use of French: he reproved me for speaking

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BILINGUALISM IN CHILDREN OF MIXED MARRIAGES

Talk given by Frau Schlör on 19 November 1988 in Frankfurt to the West German Society of the Institute of Linguists and the Frankfurt English Speaking Club

Report by Sally Lamm

Frau Schlör, of German-Russian parentage, has spent 20 years in Istanbul, which she describes as a paradise for linguists, as there are a number of minority groups which have been able to maintain their own language and culture. During this time she also studied and subsequently taught at an American college, hence the excellent English in which she delivered the talk. During this time, she concerned herself closely with bilingualism in children of mixed marriages.

Frau Schlör began with a general examination of language and human linguistic ability. We were reminded that no-one speaks any one language perfectly, and that the number of truly bilingual people is very small. Albert Schweizer had suggested that those who considered themselves bilingual should check in which language they count, dream, and name kitchen utensils or carpentry or blacksmith's tools, and it is unlikely that anyone will do all of these in the same language.

Language domination in a bilingual or multilingual environment will depend on the age of the learner, the person to whom a child speaks predominantly, and the connotations attached to various languages. (Here, on the subject of prejudices regarding other tongues, Frau Schlör quoted that 'the Chinese sing, Spaniards recite, Italians sigh, Germans rattle, English hiss and the French speak'!) The use of the correct accent will also depend on the social acceptability of a language and the extent to which foreign languages are heard and accepted. There is unfortunately often opposition to conscious bilingualism, one argument being that schizophrenia is more common among bilingual people.

Language is a tool for expressing membership of or exclusion from a group, and is only as good as its radius of application. Another important factor is the prestige of a particular language – English, for example, is considered sophisticated in Istanbul, and a very high percentage of the various minority groups attend English language colleges in Istanbul. Frau Schlör was inclined to conclude that a bilingual environment was very conducive to intellectual development, and pointed out that the minority groups are also very well represented in high positions.

When her own daughter was small, Frau Schlör conductged a survey of families with a German mother and Turkish father, with the following findings:

1. The better educated the parents, the better the chances for the children to become bilingual.
2. If both parents speak both languages, the child will make more progress in both languages.
3. Bilingualism seemed more common in higher-income families.
4. 80% of the children were completely orientated towards Turkish, and in these instances the German mothers used little or no German any longer.

Frau Schlör had been concerned when her child started mixing two languages (at the age of about two), a concern which was echoed by a number of parents present. Her daughter had used the vocabulary of one language and the grammar of the other. She quoted Professor Bauer of Essen University as suggesting that a child could in fact cope well with learning a second language at ten, rather than earlier, as before this time language learning is instinctive rather than based on an understanding of grammar. Ultimately, however, Frau Schlör does not feel that the learning of a second or more languages will negatively affect the first language. She pleads for patience and understanding if a child confuses spelling and grammar, pointing out that negative reactions will not encourage a child to persevere. The important thing is the deep structure, the common basis of ideas which need to be and can be expressed which, Frau Schlör says, enable us to learn any language – an encouraging message for 1992!

INTERCULTURA

Contact details removed

InterCultura School in suburban Chicago combines early childhood immersion and Montessori. Children beginning as early as 2¾ years old spend three to six or more hours per day at the school year round; the school also functions as a day-care center. The Montessori approach affords an environment which is wholistic and developmentally oriented. From 'practical life' (learning how to button buttons, wash hands, peel carrots) through perceptual development, art, music, reading, writing, math, natural sciences, social sciences, gymnastics and free play, the broad range of children's intellectual, social and psychological concerns is addressed – all in the target language, all through a combination of self-teaching and small-group activities in which each child is encouraged to discover him/herself and his/her world in a concrete, active way.

Typically, children in InterCultura's six-hour programme begin speaking in the foreign language in full sentences within eight to ten months, even in those cases where the foreign language is not spoken in the child's home.

InterCultura Bilingual Families Conference

Saturday, 17 June, 1989 **8.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.**

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The conference will be held at InterCultura School in Oak Park. Located at the western limits of the City of Chicago, Oak Park is notable as the birthplace and home of authors Edgar Rice Burroughs (the Tarzan stories) and Ernest Hemingway, architect Frank Lloyd Wright (the Prairie Style), psychotherapist Carl Rogers ('client-centered therapy'), and entrepreneur Ray Kroc (founder of McDonald's Restaurants). The Oak Park Historical Society, the Hemingway Foundation, and the Wright Home and Studio offer tours and other special programming.

Advance Registration for the *Conference:* $15.00.
Includes breakfast, beverage breaks, luncheon, and regular sessions. On-site registration will cost $2.00 per person.

Advance Registration for *Child-Care:* $12.50.
Includes snacks and lunch for the youngsters, as well as arts and crafts activities. On-site registration for child-care will cost $15.00 per child.

Motel Accomodations are available at the Carleton Inn, 1110 Pleasant Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302, USA. Tel.: 312/848–5000. Double room: $43; no extra charge for children. Reservations made after June 1st: $65.

THE SECOND YEAR OF A PARTIAL IMMERSION PROGRAMME AT AINSWORTH SCHOOL

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As language teachers, we are always looking for a better way to provide a meaningful and non-threatening learning environment for the students.

The following are some ideas we would like to share that were helpful in making the home–school transition easier for our kindergarten students, as well as the first and second graders:

1. It was at the end of August on a sunny afternoon, when the teachers and the students met for half-a-day in an informal setting before school began. A fun day was planned for the students with stories, finger plays, circle games and filmstrips; the day ending with a delicious snack.

   Throughout the day the parents and students became acquainted with the teacher and school's facilities (office, gym, cafeteria, restrooms). This helped to alleviate some of the anxiety that students normally experience during the first week of school.
2. To teach a second language effectively it is important that the teachers understand the factors which contribute to the formation of our children's lifestyles. Once we are aware of these components we are in a better position to influence our children positively, and to motivate them to learn a second language. Parents also need to develop their own interest to learn the language and convey that interest to their children at home.

   Often, the teachers have to make some changes in their teaching style in order to successfully relate to the students. For example, moderating the tone or pitch of his/her voice. I notice that using a moderately loud voice, while teaching, minimises the participation of the Spanish students. They may assume the teacher is angry until the children get to know the teacher and understand the language.
3. Personal space is another factor influenced by culture. Teachers need to be aware of how close they can get, physically, to each individual child and not make them uncomfortable.

   It is the teacher's role to observe and support the way the students learn best.

These suggestions made the home–school transition smoother this year and created an enthusiastic beginning to the second year.

We would like to thank you for the opportunity to share our ideas with you and hope they will be helpful.

EXCELLENT BOOKS ON BRINGING UP CHILDREN BILINGUALLY

Bilingual Children: From Birth to Teens by George Saunders (1988).

Raising Children Bilingually: The Pre-School Years by Lenore Arnberg (1987).

Price and order form for the above books on page eight.
Available in USA from Taylor and Francis, 242 Cherry St, Philadelphia, PA 19106-01906. Toll Free phone 800-821-8312.

Bilingual Family: A Handbook for Parents by P. Riley and E. Harding (1986). Published by Cambridge University Press, but is available from Multilingual Matters, price and order form on page eight.

Bringing Up Baby Bilingually by Jane Merrill (1984). Available from Facts on File, 460 Park Ave, S. New York, NY 10016, USA.

Speak French to Your Baby (1982) and **Speak Spanish to Your Baby** (1985) by Therese Slevin Pirz (a set of two one-hour tapes is also available to accompany text). Available from Chou-Chou Press, PO Box 152, Shoreham, NY 11786, USA.

Excellent Tapes in Spanish from Lucerito Music, 415 N. Divisadero, Visalia, CA 93291, USA.

LETTERS FROM READERS

ATTITUDES TOWARDS BILINGUALISM IN THE USA

I would like to respond to Barbara Acosta's letter (July 1988) and say that I also agree that more articles on US bilingualism would increase the number of readers in the US. I have been amazed when reading the Newsletter at how different it is in Europe to teach a child two languages.

My husband is from South America and I am North American. We have a daughter, Briana, who is six years old and in kindergarten. Mauricio is bilingual in Spanish and English. At first, I was very excited at the prospect of having a child who could speak both languages, especially being from the southwestern part of the US, where there is a large perentage of Spanish-speaking people. However, I was appalled at the problems we have had in getting her to just listen to my husband speak in Spanish, even as an infant. True, she has been surrounded mostly by people speaking English, but my husband has spoken to her in Spanish since infancy and I have encouraged her by learning along with her, praising her when she does acknowledge the culture or the language, and by buying her books written in Spanish. Mauricio has friends in the US who speak no English but their children have learned English here and are now refusing to speak Spanish, even at home. I know of families who have gone back to their home country simply because they felt their children were losing respect for their own culture. The attitude toward bilingualism is so negative in the US. It is shameful. We know Briana understands most of what my husband says to her in Spanish, but she won't admit it. Now that she is in kindergarten and in the 'real world', she has become adamant in her rejection of the Spanish language and culture. She is laughed at and made fun of in school because of her heritage.

The only question I can answer for Mrs Acosta is that yes, there is a good chance her little daughter will lose her enthusiasm for her father's native language. I only wish I knew how to prevent it or even change it when it appears too late. There is a tendency in the US for people to consider English the 'only' language in the world, and that anything different is less. I also think there are a great many people in the US who don't realise that English is not the most spoken language in the world.

I think of Briana as a pioneer in the move to change the thinking of people here. There need to be support groups, and more widespread education in order for people here to change their attitudes toward bilingualism. I don't feel we have lost the battle in Briana's learning Spanish, but it's going to take a determined, consistent effort and constant reassurance from everyone who loves her. It will certainly be a tragedy if she is never able to communicate with her entire family in South America. I would be helpful for the Newsletter to gather a large following in the US so that we may gain further understanding of bilingualism around the world and to obtain feedback from those with the same concerns.

Thank you for your great publication.

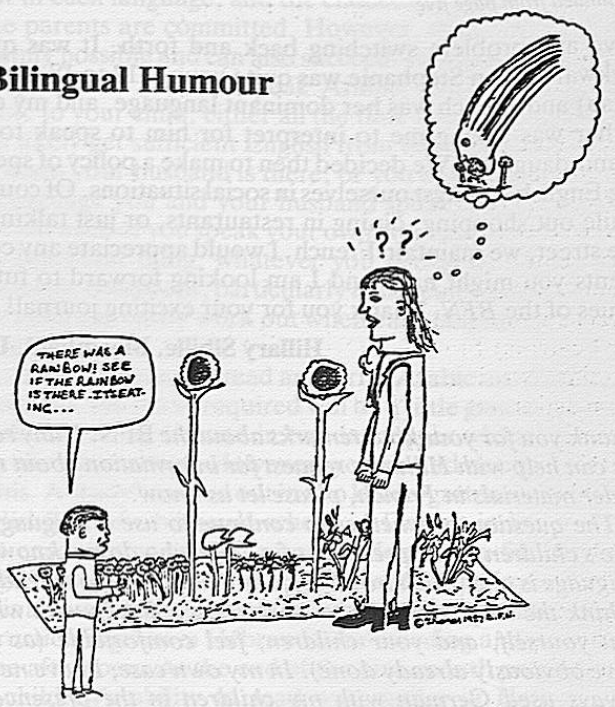
Cyndi Jaramillo, Plano, Texas 75093, USA

CONTRIBUTIONS

Please continue to send us your "stories", anecdotes, jokes, useful hints or any other contributions you think might interest our readers.

Remember, this Newsletter is for you, but above all, by you.

Bilingual Humour



Richard, aged 3¼, said to his mother on her return from work, pointing to a flower bed: 'There was a rainbow! See if the rainbow is there. It's eating . . .'

The mystery of the hungry rainbow was solved a little later when my husband told me they had seen an earthworm (in German 'Regenwurm', which literally means 'rain worm') earlier on. My husband had told Richard it was eating earth. Up till then, Richard had only known one English word beginning with 'rain', and obviously thought it must be the right translation for 'Regenwurm': rainbow.

Maureen Trott, Glinde, West Germany

LACK OF CONTACT

Thank you for your fascinating Newsletter. My husband is French and grew up bilingual in French and a German dialect he spoke at home in his village near the German border. I am American, a teacher of French and Spanish. Our daughter, Stephanie, born March 1986, speaks both French and English. We have always spoken French as a couple, so that it was natural for Stephanie to speak it at home. She now spends half-days at day care (in English, of course) while I work part-time.

Stephanie has been with us to France twice, but I believe our greatest problem, in this vast continent, is our lack of contact with other native speakers and materials. My impression, upon reading about your European subscribers is that it is relatively easy for them to find other native speakers, to purchase books and tapes, to return to the other country fairly frequently. Here in Connecticut, USA, we are quite far from France, and even Quebec. I would love to find some sources for children's books, tapes, magazines, TV shows, by mail order. We do know some French and Québecois people in this area, but very few with small children (and even some of them are raising their children in English only!)

In our family we have one exception to your principles: Jean-Michel (my husband) and I find it very difficult and rude to speak French in front of those who don't understand it, particularly my own family. Stephanie does not seem to

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have any problem switching back and forth. It was quite awkward when Stephanie was quite young (12 to 18 months or so) and French was her dominant language, and my own father was asking me to interpret for him to speak to his grand-daughter! We decided then to make a policy of speaking English amongst ourselves in social situations. Of course, while out shopping, dining in restaurants, or just talking in the street, we maintain French. I would appreciate any comments you might have and I am looking forward to future issues of the *BFN*. Thank you for your exciting journal!

Hillary Sibille, Bloomfield, USA

Thank you for your kind remarks about the BFN. *If any readers can help with Hillary's request for information about mail order materials in French, please let us know.*

The question of whether to continue to use a language to one's children in the presence of people who do not know the language is one which troubles quite a number of our readers. I think the only answer is to work out a solution with which you yourself, and your children, feel comfortable (as you have obviously already done). In my own case, I have nearly always used German with my children in the presence of English speakers, simply because I normally represent their sole contact with the language. Most of their friends here in Australia are English speakers, all their relatives are English speakers, so that if I spoke German with them only when we were by ourselves, they would not hear much German! We usually try to prevent the Enlgish speakers from feeling excluded by giving them a summary in English of any lengthy exchanges. However, I take your point that it can sometimes be awkward. When we were staying in Germany recently, for instance, my wife sometimes spoke to the children in German instead of English as she mostly does, simply because she found it tedious to keep explaining to our German friends what was going on. However, she doubts whether she would do this if we settled there permanently. About the only time I have spoken English to Thomas, my elder son, occurred during a rather tense interview with his high school principal, when we both sensed that our making exchanges to each other in German would not be appreciated and would not help our negotiations.

George Saunders

ACCENTS

I took interest in Mrs Barton-Sayarer's wonder about why a three-week visit to Turkey 'made virtually no difference to her (3½-year-old daughter's) pronunciation, though her vocabulary, grammar, and general fluency improved enormously' (*BFN* Vol. 5:4). I also had a similar experience with my 6½-year-old Japanese/English bilingual son on his first visit to the United States this past summer; whilst his fluency and accuracy noticeably improved, pronunciation remained nearly unchanged.

I believe the explanation lies in the fact that most parents don't realise the tremendous degree of 'speech muscles' coordination that is required to achieve the fluency of a native speaker of a language. A few weeks or months simply isn't sufficient time considering the several hundred muscles (throat, larynx, mouth, lips, tongue, and others) that are used in the articulation of human speech. Certain psychomotor functions (pronunciation/accent) take more time to develop than certain cognitive functions (perceiving, judging, knowing, and remembering).

Philip Reynolds, Matsuyama University, Shido, Japan

SOME ANSWERS TO YOUR QUERIES

I am English, married to an Italian, living in Rome. My son is 21 months and just starting to talk – both English and Italian. I wanted to know if it would be too much to send him to a French-speaking playgroup in the mornings. Unfortunately there are no other suitable nursery schools in my area, so it's this one or nothing! If you could give some advice on this matter I would be most grateful.

Jennifer Parkinson, Rome, Italy

There does not seem to be any evidence that young children cannot cope with three languages. As long as your son gets sufficient input in each of the three languages, English from you, Italian from your husband and the environment, and French from the kindergarten, he should acquire the three languages. Of course, since you live in Italy and Italian is also one of the languages of your home, Italian will most likely end up being your son's strongest language, but this is natural. It is also quite probable that your son will at first not keep his three languages completely separate, but, again, this is perfectly normal and nothing to become unduly concerned about. You yourself should endeavour to provide your son with as much English input as possible. How his French fares in the long run will depend on whether his contact with French can be continued beyond kindergarten.

I recently came across the *Bilingual Family Newsletter* and found it very interesting. I looked at back issues in the library to find discussion on a situation similar to mine but since I didn't find any I am writing to you for advice.

My questions are about the languages to use in bringing up our ten-month-old baby daughter. My husband and I are both Israelis, speaking Hebrew as our first language, and speak good English. We currently live in the USA but plan to return to Israel. We speak only Hebrew to our daughter. We want her to speak Hebrew since that is our native language and also since we plan to go back to Israel. We try to speak only Hebrew to her since we understand that separation of languages will help her not get confused. She does hear us speak English though, since we live in an English-speaking country. She hears English from neighbours, TV, etc. We do want her to learn English both since we live here now, and because we want her to be bilingual. Her baby sitter, who she spends 20–40 hours a week with, is Spanish speaking. She started being her baby sitter on a temporary basis so we were not concerned about the third language introduced. Now it has become a permanent situation which is very convenient and our baby is attached to her baby sitter which we don't want to change unless it is a problem because of the language.

My questions are:

1. **Will a baby that has three languages be confused? Will she learn them all? Will it slow her language development?**
2. **Are we right in trying to speak only Hebrew to our baby? Is it OK that we speak English to her when we are around English-speaking people?**
3. **Should we enrol her in day care early so she learns English properly? At what age?**

I appreciate your help on the matter since I did not find any relevant literature.

Thank you very much.

Anat Jacoby, Los Angeles, USA

The answer to your first question is basically the same as that given to Jennifer Parkinson above. How well your daughter acquires each of the three languages will depend to a large extent on the amount of input she receives in each and also on how much she is required to actively use each of her languages. When we speak of slowing her language development, we have to be careful about what we mean. If you compare your daughter with *monolingual* children in each language, you will most likely find that she lags a little behind in certain respects. But you should be looking at her *overall* language development and proficiency. She will have three languages, not just one, and it is highly likely that in at least one of these languages (depending on where you end up living) she will be indistinguishable from a monolingual speaker of that language.

The answer to your second question is: 'Do what you feel most comfortable with'. We often advise parents to not be afraid to use a minority language to their children in the presence of majority language speakers, since this shows the children that the language is nothing to be ashamed of and also ensures that they receive more input in the language than they otherwise would. However, your own attitude and the attitude of majority language speakers who are present may at times make this difficult to do. But we think that if you explain to your English-speaking friends they will accept your use of Hebrew, particularly if you give them a brief summary of what has been said.

The third question is difficult to answer, but it is highly likely, since you live in the USA, that your daughter will receive sufficient exposure to English from television, neighbourhood children, etc.

Since you intend to return to Israel, it may also be worthwhile making plans for future. Perhaps one or both of you will then have to speak English to your daughter to ensure its survival? How will she maintain her Spanish?

I am English and my husband is an Arab, and we wish to teach our child, due in the spring, both languages. The only books on bilingualism I have found so far have dealt with cases where the second language was another European tongue (French and German) and therefore fairly close to English. I am interested in learning more about bilingualism and biliteracy where the two languages are not closely related, and have different scripts, as is the case with English and Arabic.

I am also anxious to find out the best way to go about teaching the two languages. I have heard much about the 'one parent, one language' approach, but the problem in our case is that my language is English, so our child would hear less of the minority language if we were each to stick to our own language. As my husband and I both know each other's language, I wonder whether bringing up the child to see any one person speaking two languages as something normal might be a better approach in our case.

Huda Khattab, Milton Keynes, England

When a child is learning to speak two languages at the same time, the problems and rewards would seem to be the same whichever languages are involved. It is true that one of the languages may have features which seem to be more difficult for children to acquire than in the other; it is not necessarily the case that it is easier for a child to acquire, say, English and German than it is to acquire English and Arabic. The 'one parent, one language' approach is often mentioned in the literature on bilingualism because it guarantees that the child will receive constant, though not necessarily equal, input in each language, and the chances of success are good if the parents are committed. However, other methods are certainly possible and can also succeed. In your own case, for example, since you can speak Arabic, you could also use Arabic to your child, either all the time (since he or she will most likely get sufficient English from the environment), or just when your husband is there, or you could make Arabic the language you and your husband speak in front of your child but each of you speak your own language to him or her. The important thing, whatever you decide to do, is to be reasonably consistent, particularly in the early stages, so that your child can easily work out when each language is appropriate.

As far as learning to read and write Arabic and English is concerned, the effort required will be a little greater than for a child becoming literate in two languages which use basically the same script. However, you should not be daunted by this. A study* carried out in two kindergarten classes in an English/Hebrew bilingual school in Detroit in the USA is very encouraging in this respect. Hebrew, a Semitic language like Arabic, also has a different script from English and is also written from right to left. In this particular school, instruction is given in Hebrew in the morning and in English in the afternoon. At the end of the nine-month programme, the children's ability to read was similar in Hebrew and English, although, understandably, somewhat better in English, their dominant language and that of the general non-school environment. The report concludes with the words: 'This study has demonstrated the success of a beginning bilingual reading program in kindergarten. The children acquired reading skills in both their dominant and second languages . . .'

*Bonnie Z. Kupinsky: Bilingual reading instruction in kindergarten. *The Reading Teacher*, Nov. 1983, pp 132–7.

Did you know that . . . .

the best places to find language materials around the Costa del Sol, Spain are

Hopp's idiomas, Libreria, Malaga.

El libro tecnico, Libreria, C/Convento, Algeciras.

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

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French in the London underground saying, 'Don't speak so much French. People will think you're French!'

Since summer 1985 we have been to France only for three very brief trips and the occasions on which I have spoken French to Paul have been very intermittent (mostly on outings during the holidays or in bed on Saturday mornings) yet he has not lost his core of understanding, or his enthusiasm for things French. Between July 1986 and August 1987 he saved up all his birthday and Christmas money for a TGV trainset. He asked for it in French in the shop (rehearsed), but when he got it he was much too excited to be bothered with French for the next two hours. Now it is not uncommon for Paul to begin an exchange in French himself:

P: 'Fini.' (having helped himself and his sister to the last two choc-ices in the pack).

M: 'Tu veux garder le carton pour dessiner ou tu veux le jeter.' (Do you want to keep the packet to draw on or do you want to throw it away?)

P: (going back into English) 'Keep it.'

I could go on to describe how I have introduced Paul to small amounts of reading and writing in French alongside English, but that would take up the space of another article.

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

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