

The Bilingual Family Newsletter



Editor:

George Saunders 1992 Volume 9 No.2



EDITORIAL

Don't underestimate passive bilingualism

In this issue a reader asks about a problem which is not uncommon in families which are trying to bring up their children bilingually: the children show reluctance to speak their parents' language and reply mostly or even exclusively in the language spoken in the community outside the family home.

In many cases this reluctance represents just a passing phase. If the parents persist in speaking their language to the children and encouraging them, too, to speak it, the children will eventually resume using the language of their parents. I have had personal experience with this, as my two sons Thomas (at age 3 years 5 months) and Frank (at age 2:7) both went through stages when they were young where they answered me predominantly in English, even though I always spoke only German to them. I know how distressing and frustrating it can be to be speaking one language to the children and hearing them reply in their other language. But even then it is some consolation to realize that they can *understand* what you are saying, as is evidenced by their appropriate responses in the other language.

I used various strategies to entice them to use German to me rather than English: pretending not to understand (quite effective with young children if not done excessively and not done when the children are tired or upset or when what they want to say is beyond their present linguistic capabilities in your language), supplying vocabulary they would not know or seem to have forgotten, showing pleasure when they make the effort to speak to you in your language, etc. It was also amazing how well Thomas and Frank could express themselves in German when they wanted to persuade me to do something - they quickly realized that such an approach would please me more and have a greater chance of success! With both boys, however, it took about 5-6 months before their reluctance to use German to me decreased to the point where over 95% of their sentences were German. Quite a bit of patience is therefore necessary.

In some families, however, children can remain passive or receiving bilinguals (the term for bilinguals who understand two languages but speak only one) for much longer periods of time. It is not unusual in immigrant families, for example, to find the parents speaking to their children in their own language, but the children replying in the language of the new country. Some people would regard this as failed bilingualism, but I would disagree. It is quite an accomplishment in its own right to be able to understand most of what is said in a language, even if you cannot say much in it. In the case of the immigrant family, for example, it enables the parents to continue speaking their native language, the language in which they feel most at home

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JESSY'S STRUGGLE TO BECOME BILINGUAL

by Birgit Szymanski

I vividly remember little Bobby whom I met during my first visit to England in 1984. He was six years old then and his native-like control of English and German struck me as something spectacular.

Unfortunately, my fascination for bilingualism was submerged for many years thereafter - until last year when I returned to England to spend an academic year at the University of York. Looking for a good book to read, I went to the university's library one day and coincidentally I ended up in the section of linguistics. A bright yellow book caught my attention: It was George Saunders' *'Bilingual Children: Guidance for the Family'*. I borrowed it and my interest in the subject returned. I started reading a lot of literature on it and finally left York in the hope of making bilingualism the topic of my research paper at my home university.

A first chat on the phone brought the news that the child refused to speak the minority language

As fate would have it, I told a friend of mine of my plans and she gave me the address of a bilingual family. A first chat on the phone brought the news that the child refused to speak the minority language.

In the meantime I was lucky to find a caring and encouraging project supervisor to guide me academically. We agreed to start a detailed case study on the child's language behaviour which was something I had never done before.

When I met Jessy, the bilingual girl, for the first time I was very tense, not really knowing how to get a child speaking in a language she did not want to use. At the beginning of the observation she was eight years and two months old. Her father had spoken English with her from birth. The mother had kept her mother tongue German as a medium of communication with her daughter whilst speaking English with her husband. Looks like an ideal background for bilingual up-bringing, doesn't it?

In fact, the situation is far from being a stimulus to use and maintain her two languages. The father is almost the only person who speaks English to her and due to his long working hours he hardly gets a chance to do so.

Jessy attends a German primary school. The only American playmate she had occasionally seen moved back to the States

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two months ago. Over the years Jessy has become very insecure when it comes to English. During the first meeting, she uttered approximately 20 English words in two hours of intense conversation. The words only appeared when specifically asked for and she did not produce a single complete English sentence, always resorting to German whenever asked something more complicated.

Fortunately she gained some confidence during the course of the observation which has resulted in her now trying to express herself in English.

At the time of writing, she does not mind me speaking English to her anymore and if I provide her with enough interesting stimuli she almost forgets her fears. A few years ago, children in her neighbourhood had teased her when speaking English. This and a number of other negative feedbacks gave her the feeling of being different from monolingual German children, which is something she detests up to the present day. I was lucky to notice her attitude early enough in the observation and started giving her an idea of the multilingual world. The

A few years ago, children in her neighbourhood had teased her when speaking English.

Playmobil people proved to be an invaluable help. One of those little plastic people was dressed differently from all the others and when asked, Jessy made him a man from China. That was in mid-October and it inspired my whole work. I asked what language people in China speak and the outcome was most significant: Jessy started talking 'Chinese' by rhyming and arranging syllables in a foreign-sounding order. I need not tell you that she enjoyed this game so much that her mother had to cope with a 'Chinese' speaking daughter for the whole week thereafter. I suppose one could say she discovered the world of languages at this point.

BILINGUAL HUMOR

Shooting Tournament

('Bitte kein Fluchen.' = *No swearing, please.* 'Mist' is a mild German swearword meaning Damn.)



Soon after this incident we found a multilingual Playmobil-interpreter to establish an efficient communication between all Playmobil-people, because they of course suddenly all spoke different languages.

'Mr. Chicano', that is what she called the man from China, quickly turned into a 'Chinese'-English bilingual with whom we

Providing a balanced input in both languages surely helps to avoid problems.

had to speak the one or the other language respectively. He and his family as a domain of English were extremely helpful for the first two months and we slowly extended this domain to all dolls and cuddly toys in her bedroom. All through the observation period Jessy had been aware of the fact that I am doing a research project which will eventually end up in a detailed analysis of her linguistic behaviour. Funnily enough she takes it as something of a game and is always keen to get everything she says on tape. However, the girl does not quite understand that I am studying her second language deficits. She sees my work as something she has to participate in, which in return gives her the feeling of being important.

When told that a professor from Bremen University was supervising the project, she did not know what to make of a professor. How do you explain the academic world to an eight-year old child? I ended up by saying that he knows more than her teacher at school and therefore teaches students who want to become teachers. Her reaction was amazing: to Jessy, he became somebody high up in her personal hierarchy - he got a place almost next to God. That was why she strictly followed my plans for several weeks thereafter, especially when carefully reminded of the professor at the University who had given us jobs to do.

I visit Jessy every fortnight and a major breakthrough became obvious early in January. Mr. Chicano is not needed anymore now to get her talking English. These days Jessy makes the effort to use English no matter how hard she has to struggle for words e.g:

Jessy: Wait a minute!

Birgit: Yeah, we've got all the time in the world. Come on, show me the photos!

Jessy: That's ah...der, er (silence) (That's ah...the, he)

Birgit: Who's that?

Jessy: The ma..ah the Vater, the Daddy and he was a big, big big long time (break lasting a few seconds) ago along and the mother, wait a minute, oh (giggling) and the father (break lasting a few seconds), he was so mean to his kids, he hit him, too. Right in the face!

This conversation was based on a play with dolls. One of them was a father whom she imagined to be cruel. The first part of her utterance is incomprehensible, which is partly due to the various stops and new beginnings within the sentence. On the other hand she obviously struggles for words and the formation of full sentences.

A second example may serve to illustrate her problems here: the following conversation took place on the same day but with a time difference of about 15 minutes.

Jessy: (pretends to hold a letter in her hand) Shall I read it? Come to me! Tonight is the party of six o'clock. The sixth is not down and not up, by me is it in the evening. Mr. Chicano.

Birgit: And what does it mean?

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TWENTY YEARS ON

Joseph McConnon

We recently celebrated our twentieth wedding anniversary which provided an opportunity to reflect on our family which is, among other things, bilingual. I had studied Medicine in England and came to Toronto in 1967 for postgraduate training where I later met my wife Mari-Ann who was then a medical student at the University of Toronto. Her parents had fled from Estonia in 1944 as the Russian army returned and had reached Sweden by boat. She was born in Sweden and had come to Canada as a small child. There are about ten thousand Estonians in the Toronto area, who mainly arrived in the 1950s and who had organized various educational and cultural facilities which

The expatriate Estonians are strongly nationalistic and until quite recently Estonian independence seemed a rather hopeless cause.

we were able to make good use of in time. Estonian is a Finno-Ugrian Language which is closely related to modern Finnish. We have five children. Peter is 19 and in his second year at Harvard. Tom (17) and Paul (15) are at St. Michael's College School in Toronto and Aili (11) and Andrew (9) are at St. Francis Xavier our local primary school in Brampton, a suburb of Toronto.

The expatriate Estonians are strongly nationalistic and until quite recently Estonian independence seemed a rather hopeless cause. They had a firm sense of the necessity of maintaining their culture abroad as it was greatly threatened in Estonia by the Russian occupation and the programme of Russification. We felt it was important that the children should speak Estonian and fell into the pattern in which I spoke to them in English and Mari-Ann spoke to them in Estonian. I was relieved to find some years later, on reading George Saunders' 'Bilingual Children: Guidance for the Family', that this was an approved paradigm. It is, I am sure, a common practice in Canada where bilingualism is widespread. Louis St. Laurent, a Canadian Prime Minister in the 1950s, said that he was about five before he discovered that not everybody spoke French to their father and English to their mother! Our children's English was less good than their Estonian until they started school when their English caught up. They are all fluent in Estonian and we have been fortunate that they see Mari-Ann's parents and other

Although bringing up children bilingually does involve more effort, it certainly is well worthwhile.

Estonian speaking friends frequently. We have also had access to an excellent Estonian school system. This is run in Toronto for two and a quarter hours on a weekday evening. There are six years in the primary school followed by three years of High School and one year of Gymnasium (Grammar School). Recently a chair in Estonian studies was founded at the University of Toronto so that it is now possible to study it at a University level too. A few of the children at the Estonian school are like ours, from mixed marriages in which only one parent speaks the language, and they seem to do as well academically. In addition to the school system there is a summer camp Joekaaru near Toronto which is run entirely in Estonian which gives an opportunity for total immersion for a month of the year. There are also Scouts and Guides and other organizations available which function in Estonian.

In 1987 our whole family visited Estonia for ten days. This was before the recent dramatic political changes had begun. Marxist slogans were on billboards on the streets and we paid two dollars for a rouble at the official exchange. There we met about forty members of Mari-Ann's family, only two of whom we had met before when they visited Canada. As none of our relatives spoke English it was vital that the children spoke Estonian to get the most from the holiday. This certainly emphasized to them one important purpose of the exercise. We were able to visit several cities and towns and greatly enjoyed the visit. Subsequently, of course, the whole political picture changed, culminating in the restoration of independence to the three Baltic states in the summer of 1991. Cultural exchanges are now much easier between Canada and Estonia. Our eldest son Peter spent seven weeks in Estonia in the summer of 1990 before starting university. He was able to get about 35 roubles for a dollar at that time. Tom will be making a similar trip this summer. Several of our relatives have been able to visit Canada in the last three years. There have been more Estonians coming to Canada for postgraduate studies and some have been recruited to teach in the Estonian school system.

Although bringing up children bilingually does involve more effort, it certainly is well worthwhile. The brunt of the effort is borne by MariAnn as she is the only Estonian speaking parent at home. She has chosen to work part-time as a family doctor in order to have more time at home. In ordinary conversation, the children need to be reminded to speak Estonian. In practice there are often separate conversations going on at different ends of the dinner table in different languages. More general discussions involving me are, of necessity, in English. The difficulties are perhaps more obvious early in one's family life but the rewards are great. The children are enriched by the two cultures and move easily between their Estonian and Canadian social circles. Canada provides an ideal background in that we have two official languages and multiculturalism is encouraged by the Government. Our three younger children have also benefited from a French immersion program at St. Francis School in which grades five to eight receive half of the day's instruction in French. We hope that they may eventually become functionally trilingual.

Joseph McConnon

1. Karl, Ann. *The Political Refugees: A History of the Estonians in Canada*. McClelland and Stewart. Toronto, 1985
2. Kadri-Ann Laar *Estonian Ethnic Identity: Language Maintenance and Shift* J. Baltic Studies - Vol. 21, no. 3. Fall 1990

BILINGUAL CHILDREN

From Birth to Teens

George Saunders

"The book is finely crafted by the father, linguist, scientist and author who, in my view, is a natural teacher whose skill and insight into language learning is reflected in this book, a major contribution to the literature on bilingualism"

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288 pages

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MOST CHILDREN COULD BE *AT LEAST* BILINGUAL

Example of Luxembourg

Deirdre L. Cinquemani Condon

I am British, married to an Italian and living and working in Luxembourg. I subscribe to the Bilingual Family Newsletter because of my working environment and my children's education.

I found Dr. Saunders' article on Brunei extremely interesting and I am very impressed by the contribution Australia is making to the study of bilingualism.

I would like to tell you a bit about the country in which I now live which is in the heart of Europe. Luxembourg is a small country, bordered by Belgium, France and Germany. It is host to people from many other countries. Foreign banks and foreign companies, as well as several EEC institutions have offices in

Somehow our children find a means of communicating when they play together.

Luxembourg. Most Luxembourgers are multilingual. Of course they speak their own mother tongue - Luxembourgish; they start to learn German at kindergarten, soon followed by French. In secondary school they learn English and, depending on what further education they choose they may also learn another language - frequently Italian or Spanish. I have yet to find a Luxembourger who does not speak fluent English.

Italian people started coming to Luxembourg in the 1890s as migrant workers, and Portuguese people came during the 1960s as migrant workers. Their children learnt their mother tongue and then went to local schools and learnt Luxembourgish, German, French and English. These days you often find second and third generation children of Italian or Portuguese origin in Luxembourg able to converse at least in five languages, even if they leave school early.

Officials at the EEC institutions can send their children to the European Schools where they study in their mother tongue, the idea being that should their parents return to their country of

origin, the children would be able to integrate into their national educational system without any problems. Pupils at the European School learn a second language, starting in their first year at primary school; the choice is English, French or German at that level. By the time they reach secondary school the children have to be fluent enough in the second language to be able to study other subjects in it. They can then choose a third language from the remaining official languages of the EEC, and later, if they wish, a fourth language.

Since working here I have found out that most Italians are bilingual. They learn their own dialect, which is often completely different from Italian (for example *Slave*, which is spoken in the north east of Italy) and Italian.

My two children speak English and French and somehow, in spite of my husband's insistence that it will not be of much use to them, they have also picked up quite a lot of Italian. I have given them every encouragement I can but my husband's mother-tongue is Neapolitan and he feels that if he has to speak a "foreign" language to them it might as well be French, which is their first foreign language at school.

We live in a town on the outskirts of the capital city. We have Danish, Italian, English, Spanish, German, Berber, Belgian (from Wallonia) and Luxembourgish neighbours. Their children go to the local school and ours to the European School. Somehow our children find a means of communicating when they play together with no problems. Through their attendance at the after school study centre my children hear the other languages of the EEC. Through the local television stations - in German, French and Luxembourgish - and satellite television - English, Dutch, German, French, Italian, Japanese... - my children are aware of, and exposed to, other languages of their own choice and they are free to select the programmes they want to watch during children's viewing hours. As long as parent give positive encouragement from the outset there would seem to be no reason why most children of the future should not be at least bilingual.

ONE EUROPE - 100 NATIONS

Roy N. Pedersen

Foreword by Magnus Magnusson

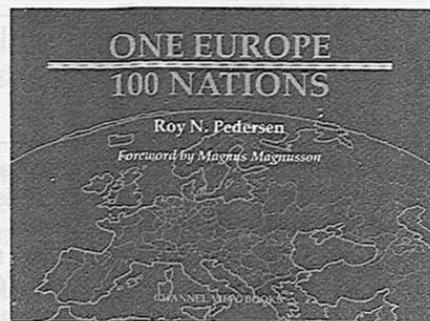
The social and political turmoil witnessed in Europe over the last few years means that referring to 'one Europe' is no longer either accurate or appropriate - but was it ever? Over the centuries European lands have been conquered and liberated, boundaries have changed, languages have died out and been revived, nations have come and gone.

One Europe: 100 Nations is the first book to provide a concise and completely up-to-date guide to the main 100 nations of present-day Europe. Written in a lively and anecdotal style, special features include: a separate page for every nation with brief history; full colour illustrations throughout; numerous helpful maps and charts; appendices covering European religions, languages, monarchies, and a detailed timetable of recent events in Europe.

Roy Pedersen presents an historical survey of the region, its cultures, heritage, and languages, together with a helpful guide to heraldry and flags. He also looks to the future and offers an analysis of the likely outcome of current events.

Hbk 1-85359-123-8 144 pages 1992

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LANGUAGE & CULTURE

by Mandeep Sandhu

Culture? Have you ever wondered what culture is? I have. This is what I came up with when I looked at my culture: religion, language, ways of thinking, ethics/morality, attitude to elders, food, clothes, music, art and education.

Language? What has language got to do with culture? This is what I found out - language and religion - for me I need to speak and understand Punjabi to speak at the Gurdwara (temple).

Language and (attitude to) elders - for me I need to speak Punjabi to speak to my elders, especially the ones who don't speak English.

Language and food - I need to speak Punjabi to pronounce the names of Punjabi food.

Language and clothes - I need to speak Punjabi to pronounce the names of the Punjabi clothes.

Language and music - I need to speak Punjabi to understand and sing-along with the Punjabi music.

I found out that we have different words for our relations depending on whether they are on my mother's side or my father's side and whether they are older or younger than my parents! This may sound confusing to you but it's not when you know who is who to you!

And that I put my hands together when I say 'hello' in Punjabi but I don't when I say 'hello' in English. I did a kind of survey to see what language I speak in one activity and not the other.

I pray in Punjabi and not in English. I speak Punjabi when I am talking to someone older than me e.g. grandfather. I speak Punjabi when I don't want anyone but my friends to know what I am saying e.g. teacher, enemy. I speak English at school and at home sometimes. I write in English and not in Punjabi.

Did you notice that I have to speak Punjabi to do most of the things in culture. So if I didn't speak Punjabi I would probably lose my culture, which I don't want to happen.

Now you have read what I think Culture is, maybe you could think about yours for a moment!

KEY ISSUES IN BILINGUALISM AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Colin Baker

This book looks at world-wide evidence on three issues that concern all those interested in bilingualism and bilingual education. The first of these is whether speaking two languages affects thinking skills. The second is whether children suffer or benefit from education which uses two languages, and the third issue of the book concerns the role of attitude and motivation in bilingualism. The discussion on this third issue suggests key psychological factors in the status and destiny of languages.

The book concludes by integrating the three issues. A wide variety of theories of bilingual development at a personal, social and educational level are explored. This provides the basis for a summary of the present state of our understanding about bilingualism and bilingual education.

Pbk 0-905028-94-5 222 pages

£8.95 (US\$19.00)

Letters



"It was with great pleasure that I read your green book (George Saunders: *Bilingual Children: From Birth to Teens*) and now I'm subscribing to the 'Bilingual Family Newsletter' in the hope of gaining from others' experiences, as my wife and I embark on our own little bilingual here in Japan (where I'm a part-time student and part-time teacher of English). Our daughter, Asako, is almost two years old and is a joy to watch as she stumbles through two cultures and languages. Since reading your book we've been using the one-parent-one-language method; and although I spend a lot of time with her, reading, playing, taking walks and baths and all that, still, as the only person she meets who speaks English I find it quite a challenge, especially so when I like to spend a couple of hours a day studying Japanese but have to keep it a secret of sorts from her. Your example will be a shining light for me, as the hounds from the big wide world begin baying closer to the door.

I'm also from Australia, countryside Victoria, a 99% monolingual community (only the fruit shop and Chinese restaurant stick out as reminders that other people don't 'g'day'). But I went to high school in Melbourne, dizzy multicultural Melbourne. My school was typical northern suburban Catholic. 90% of the final year students had Italian backgrounds, but they didn't fare particularly well on the Higher School Certificate Italian tests. Bilingual upbringings probably didn't seem possible to their economically beleaguered parents back in the 50s and 60s when decisions would have been made. Most of my Italo-Australian friends don't speak much Italian, more's the pity.

And now, in a twist of irony, I'm in the position which their parents were in and don't want my daughter to be divorced from my wife's culture because of something like language.

As an aside, on the points of hyper-correctness when translating the names of foods and things culturally specific to Japan, I can only laugh at some of the high-sounding translations of familiar everyday objects or foods. Konnyaku becomes Devil's Tongue Root, for example, and both are equally foreign to native speakers of English. Thank God for the spread of Japanese words in English - sushi, karaoke, shoji, sumo, tsunami, etc. Next? Konnyaku!

Thanks again for your work in making parents of bilingual persuasion more confident!"

Mick Barrow, Fukui-ken, Japan

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.



Will she ever speak French?

I would like to receive some advice regarding my four year old daughter. I am French and I have spoken to her in French since birth. However, because I had to work, she did not receive a full French language input, as the minder obviously spoke to her in English. My English husband speaks no French and we live in England.

Sophie, my child, understands the most complex structures in French and responds to them accordingly. However, she has never spoken in French to me nor to my family whom we visit regularly. They also visit us regularly we see each other five or six times a year for periods ranging from three to twenty days. She mixes up some French and English words occasionally. When she was little she seemed to use the French word until she knew its equivalent in English and would then disregard the French word.

I wonder whether she will ever speak French. Because of her shy nature she is reluctant to speak French with French children, although she makes herself understood by gestures or English. Unfortunately, there are no children in my family and she has mainly adult contact with little play.

Could you please advise me on this matter?'

Mrs. L. Duchemin, Rochester, England

The problem you describe is not unusual. In the literature on bilingualism it is known as passive or receiving bilingualism. That is, the child understands a language, but speaks it only a little or not at all. There are many such receiving bilinguals in the world. Studies in a number of countries have shown that there are many immigrant families where one or both of the parents speak(s) his/her native language to the children but receive(s) replies mainly in the language of the environment.

Of course, it is natural for parents to want their children not only to understand, but also to speak, their native language. Quite a number of parents actually find it psychologically difficult to keep speaking their language to a child who consistently answers in another language and shift themselves to using that language. Once this happens, however, the children will rapidly lose even their passive knowledge of their parents' language, i.e. they will become monolingual, knowing only one language.

When compared with monolingualism, receiving bilingualism is quite a worthwhile achievement in itself. Being a receiving bilingual child who can understand what is being said in two languages, will mean, for example, that your daughter will not feel excluded from family gatherings where French is predominantly spoken. Compare that with a child who could understand no French! My first piece of advice would, therefore be: keep speaking French to Sophie!

If she is given plenty of encouragement, she may well begin to

speaking some French as well. There is ample evidence that passive bilinguals can become active bilinguals given the right circumstances. An acquaintance of mine in Sydney, for example, has two boys aged ten and twelve, to whom she has always spoken Spanish, but who have nearly always answered her in English. Last year she took them to South America for six months. At first they were very frustrated in their interactions with the people there because they could understand what was said to them, but could not reply, their English no longer being of any use. Within days, however, the boys' passive bilingualism started to become active: hesitantly at first, but then increasingly confidently, they started to speak Spanish - to the surprise and delight of their mother. Now back in Australia, the two boys continue to speak Spanish to their mother, with the occasional English word or phrase thrown in, but predominantly Spanish.

So, please continue to speak French to your daughter and encourage any attempts she makes to say something in French. Don't worry about the grammatical correctness of what she says in French - the aim is to make her confident to use her French. You can worry about correctness later. Good luck!

The Editor

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

BILINGUALLY SPEAKING exists in Cambridge, U.K.

Bilingually Speaking is a support network of families in and around Cambridge. The Network has been started by parents who are raising, or intending to raise, their children with two or more languages.

Bilingually Speaking aims to promote the idea and practice of bilingualism and offer support to parents who wish to bring their children up in this way.

Bilingually Speaking aims to put families sharing similar languages in touch with each other to form play and discussion groups and thereby increase opportunities for both children and parents to use their languages.

In addition, the group will hold open meetings to discuss approaches to raising children bilingually, to share experiences and hear guest speakers.

Bilingually Speaking believes that family life with two or more languages can be fun and offer great benefits to both children and parents.

If interested please write to:

Contact details removed

Please get in touch with us if you know of other similar support groups for bilingual families or intercultural living. We maintain an information file of organisations which might be of use for the readers of "The Bilingual Family Newsletter".

Continued from page two

Jessy: Wir sollen morgen um sechs eigentlich da sein bei seinChef, damit er sich abmelden kann. (*We're supposed to meet his boss at 6 o'clock because he wants to give notice of his departure*)

Again part of the utterance leaves it to the listener to try and make sense of it. In my opinion both of these incomprehensible parts are results of a lack of vocabulary and grammatical deficiencies. In all, there is a strong tendency towards simplification in Jessy's English. About 50 per cent of her seemingly English utterances are based on German syntax and

I believe that it is by no means too late to solve Jessy's problems.

at times it is virtually impossible to draw the line between her first and second languages. Erroneous negations in the minority language have become fossilized. Jessy for example constantly uses 'I know it not' instead of 'I don't know (it)'. She forms questions by fronting full verbs instead of taking auxiliary verbs which produces the following results: 'Lives he in America? Goes he out?'. In her English, the interrogative why also serves as an introductory word for answers, which leads to this outcome: 'Why are you doing this? Why I like it.'. The exclusive use of be has come to substitute for is and are, not to mention the fact that she is unsure of when to say he and she and frequently gets muddled up with prepositions. Jessy almost always abandons the third person singular 's' which goes with verbs in the Present Tense and in general, as far as English is concerned, one could speak of a restricted code with a fairly limited stock of words.

Taking all deficits described into consideration, one could justifiably argue whether Jessy can be considered a real bilingual child or not. She is certainly not a balanced bilingual in the sense that she is equally skilled in her two languages. The question of her degree of bilingualism brings two other important aspects into the discussion: Due to reading and writing problems in German, she is currently repeating Grade I at the German primary school and only recently has progress in those skills become noticeable. At the moment biliteracy is therefore not a topic of conversation in the family, which in turn means that a study of her language behaviour can at present only resort to listening comprehension and speaking tasks. However, the observation period is still continuing and will do so for approximately two more months. Large parts of the material on tape have been analysed but there is still a lot more to do. I view my findings as a first result and would be most grateful for comments on it.

I believe that it is by no means too late to solve Jessy's problems. To achieve a relatively balanced bilingualism she could be encouraged to join one of the various playgroups run by the American community in her neighbourhood. Having stories read aloud to her on a regular basis is surely another invaluable help to language maintenance. An increased use of American videos they are easy to get where she lives - could also stimulate her. Lastly, Jessy urgently needs a competent speaker of English to talk to and to have her mistakes carefully corrected. This person, whether it be her father or anybody whom she trusts, should also try to extend her vocabulary.

It is by no means my intention to blame the parents for Jessy's problems. They have let themselves into the 'adventure' of bilingualism without knowing anything about its principles. Now that she has gained a little bit of confidence to use English, she needs help to develop her bilingualism. Providing a balanced input in both languages surely helps to avoid problems such as Jessy's. This is the advice I would like to give all bilingual families.

Continued from page one

and are most competent. The fact that the children can understand the language means that they can participate in family activities without feeling left out.

One of the most well-known studies of bilingualism, 'The Speech Development of a Bilingual Child: A Linguist's Record (1934-49)' which was carried out by Werner Leopold, shows that passive bilingualism can be turned into active bilingualism if the circumstances are right. Werner, a German living in the U.S.A., always spoke German to his two daughters, whilst his wife used English to them. The younger daughter, Karla, was a classic case of a receiving or passive bilingual. Although she understood almost everything her father said, she rarely answered him in German. But when, at the age of nineteen, she visited Germany, she was able to activate her dormant German.

"For the first few days she did not try to speak German because her parents went along and did the talking. Then she opened up and spoke German fluently and with surprising correctness. In view of the lack of practice in speaking, I had not expected her to be able to converse so well; but the long, deeply embedded preparation, although passive in her case, asserted itself amazingly."

This example, which is not unique, shows clearly that passive bilingualism should not be undervalued. How much better to be able to understand a language well than not at all! Acquiring speaking skills in a language you already understand is obviously a far easier task than starting to learn the language completely from zero.

George Saunders

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

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