The Bilingual Family Newsletter

MULTILINGUAL MATTERS

News and Views for Intercultural People

Editor: **Marjukka Grover**

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EDITORIAL

You may be wondering why in this issue we have decided to cover bilingual education policies in the USA in such a detailed way by two of the leading pro bilingual educationalists in North America, Terrence Wiley and James Crawford.

All of us who attach importance to our own mother-tongue (first language) understand the anxieties felt by the minority language parents in the USA when suddenly the ENGLISH ONLY movement gets the upper hand. Is my language something to be ashamed of? Should I not pass it on to my children? Why can't my children learn Spanish AND English?

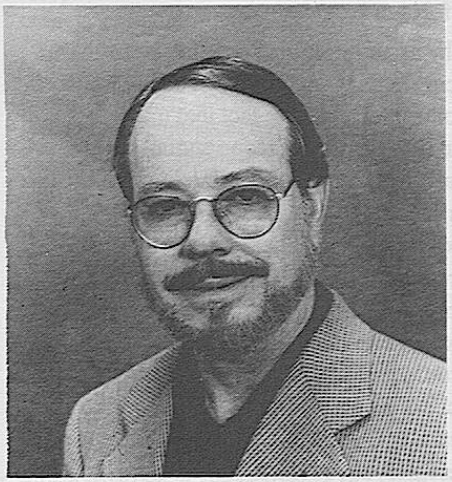
The research conducted in the last decades has shown that properly organised and funded bilingual education is the best way to educate minority-language children. By maintaining and developing their mother-tongue skills to a high level, the children are in a far better position to learn the majority language properly and succeed in school. Their self-esteem is strengthened and they become more open and tolerant citizens. The bilingual programme is NOT a threat to the English language (or for that matter any other language). When will policy makers learn that citizens with good language skills should be an asset to any country – especially to an English speaking country with a monolingual outlook.

Just now England is really beautiful with the colourful summer flowers and grass so green that it hurts the eye. Although the evenings are light, I miss the real northern summer nights when the sun doesn't go down at all. Write to us about what you like/dislike of your new country and what you miss most from home.

Marjukka Grover

PROPOSITION 227
California Restricts the Educational Choices for Language Minority Children

Terrence Wiley



In June of 1998, a controversial law called *'English for the Children' – Proposition 227,* was approved by 61% of California's voters (turnout in the US is low and many immigrants living in California do not have voting rights). It was designed to have a major impact on the education of language minority children. According to California law, if a sufficient number of registered voters petition, a proposed new law/proposition can be placed on the ballot for voter approval or rejection. In theory, the process is supposed to be a grassroots approach that allows the people to further their own agendas without having to rely on the state legislative branch of government.

Although this process was originally well-intended, it can be abused when voters are poorly informed about complex issues or when a majority is able to impose its will on minorities. These concerns were raised when *Proposition 63,* which declared English to be the sole official language of the state, was approved overwhelmingly; inconnection with *Proposition 187,* which attempted to limit benefits provided to undocumented immigrants; and with *Proposition 209*, which sought to end affirmative action programs intended to make competition between the majority and minorities more equitable.

The rationale for *Proposition 227*, as it was presented to the voters, was based on five assumptions:

1. English is the language of opportunity because of its dominance in science, business, and technology.
2. Immigrant language minority parents are eager to have their children learn English.
3. Schools have a moral obligation to teach English, given its importance.
4. For the past two decades California schools have performed poorly in educating immigrant children, as indicated by their higher rates of dropping out of school.
5. Young immigrant children acquire second languages easily.

Assuming all these assumption were correct, the argument concludes that *'all children in California public schools shall be taught English as rapidly as possible'* (from the text of the initiative that was co-authored by Ron Unz, a businessman who had previously, unsuccessfully run for Governor, and

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PROPOSITION... ***from page one***

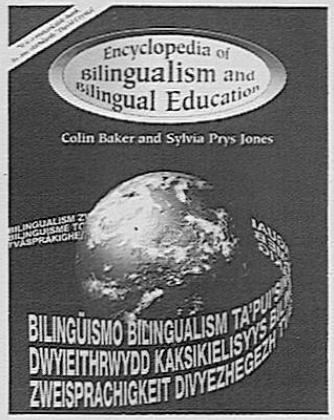
Gloria Matta Tuchman, a teacher who unsuccessfully campaigned to be the State Superintendent of Education).

Advocates of bilingual education and many language minority parents have found little argument with the first three assumptions regarding the importance of English and the need to teach it. However, many have questioned the logic of posing the issue as an either-or choice between English and other languages. Moreover, although most language minority parents enthusiastically want their children to learn English, when given an informed choice, the majority of parents also indicate that they desire their children to become bilingual. The forth assumption, that bilingual education causes high drop-out rates among language minority children, is dubious because only about 30% of California's 1.4 million language minority students received any bilingual education prior to passage of *Proposition 227*, even though they were

"...although most language minority parents enthusiastically want their children to learn English, when given an informed choice, the majority of parents also indicate that they desire their children to become bilingual."

eligible. If the cause of lower academic achievement for many language minority children were to have been investigated before the approval of *227*, it would have been necessary to look at those schools where no bilingual education was being offered, because those schools constituted the majority.

The fifth assumption that young immigrant children rapidly acquire second languages is naive, unless we carefully examine the social and educational contexts of, and opportunities for, second language learning. The kinds of proficiencies in second language that we expect students to learn must also be specified. Most children can acquire some degree of oral competence in a second language quickly, if they have opportunities for frequent social contact with fluent speakers of the language. However, in some areas of California,



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language minority children, especially those who are Spanish-speaking, attend schools where there are few native speakers of English. In schools where over 90% of the children are speakers of languages other than English, the position of English is analogous to that of a foreign language.

The assumption that any child can acquire a second language easily is also contradicted by the fact that many English-speaking monolingual children have difficulties mastering literacy skills in school. Often, the language expectations and demands of the schools are very different from those of the children's homes. Why then would we expect that language minority children would have an easy task in learning school English or in using English to learn academic content? Experience and research have long informed us that language minority children face even greater obstacles in attaining school literacy in a second language when they do not have an opportunity to develop initial literacy in their home language and when they are required to compete with native speakers of the dominant language of schooling. Unfortunately, in the public media debate regarding *227*, many news writers gave more attention to the anecdotal opinions of pundits opposed to bilingual education rather than to the findings of educational researchers.

Since the passage of *227*, several issues have posed major challenges for schools and parents. First, *227* imposes English-only instruction. Second, *227* disallows bilingual education, unless language minority parents request a waiver from English-only instruction and request bilingual education. Even if they do, there has been no guarantee that their children will receive it. To make matters more difficult, implementing *227*, or any other educational policy, is further complicated by the decentralized nature of education in the United States and California because schools have considerable authority concerning how they choose to implement state policies. California schools also do not have an equal funding allocation. As a result, program quality for language minority students varies greatly across the state.

Preliminary reports regarding the implementation of *227* suggest considerable variation across California school districts. Some school districts, typically those that had quality bilingual programs before *227*, have managed to maintain bilingual programs because they did a good job of informing parents and had strong parental support. Other districts have dropped their bilingual programs and have not made much effort to inform parents of their right to request waivers. In a smaller number of cases, special *Charter Schools* are allowed to develop alternative education program such as dual immersion bilingual programs.

For those schools that offer no bilingual programs, the first important question becomes one of what kind of developmental English language programs they have, or are developing. The second question raises the issue of what is the relationship between the developmental English programs and the required academic curriculum. Again, there appears to be considerable variation across districts. Some guidance is now available because the state has recently developed a framework for English Language Development = ELD*.

The new ELD Standards are designed to help language minority students bridge to the English Language Arts Standards that are designed to guide instruction for all students. Unfortunately, during the time period when the anti-bilingual education movement was in full stride promoting *227*, advocates of skills-based, phonics instruction succeeded in reworking the framework for the English Language Arts. As a result, the current literacy framework favors a one-size-fits-all phonics-based approach for all incipient readers of English, regardless of their language backgrounds. It offers few relevant strategies for accommodating students for whom English is a second language, or for

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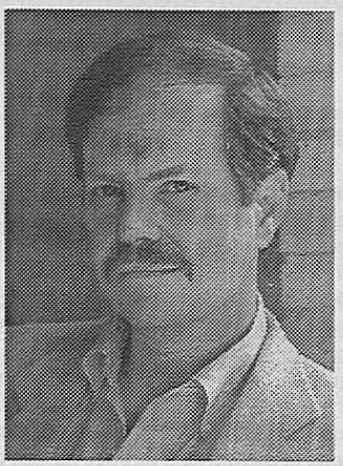
NEWS FROM THE USA

Anti-Bilingual Movement Spreads

by James Crawford



James Crawford is a freelance journalist and an author of several books including *Bilingual Education: History, Politics, Theory, and Practice* and *Hold Your Tongue: Bilingualism and the Politics of 'English Only'*. He will be writing a regular column in the BFN bringing news on bilingual issues from North America.

A new campaign to eliminate bilingual education in the USA has targeted Arizona as the next battleground. English-only proponents hope to force a referendum there next year, modeled on California's *Proposition 227*, which would ban native-language instruction for virtually all public-school children with limited English proficiency. In Arizona, these students include not only speakers of Spanish and Asian languages, but also a substantial number of Native Americans including Navajo, Tohono O'odh am, Yaqui, and Hualapai whose ancestral tongues are threatened with extinction.

Ironically, Arizona has been among the most aggressive states in promoting bilingualism for all children. Besides encouraging foreign-language instruction beginning in kindergarten, the state is home to numerous bilingual education programs that foster fluency in two languages, often for majority as well as minority students. Though popular with parents, these programs are suddenly vulnerable to attack.

If adopted, the so-called *English for the Children* initiative would severely restrict opportunities for bilingual schooling at least for children who start out limited in English. These students would be assigned to one year of *English immersion*, then be mainstreamed into regular, all-English classrooms. Parents would have no right to appeal, and any teacher or administrator who resisted the English-only mandate would be subject to fines.

Proponents must gather more than 100,000 signatures from Arizona voters to qualify their measure for the November 2000 ballot. With ample resources to hire petitioners, however, they should have little difficulty in doing so .

As in California, the campaign is being financed and directed by Ron Unz, a wealthy businessman-turned-politician who has made the assault on bilingualism a personal crusade. He is already looking beyond Arizona, scouting out prospects for similar initiatives in Colorado, Massachusetts, New York, and quite likely other states.

Though a conservative Republican, Unz has broken with his party's anti-immigrant wing, seeking to position himself as an immigrant 'advocate'. He claims to represent Spanish-speaking parents who are frustrated by their children's slow progress in learning English. In Arizona, press accounts have highlighted the fact that several anti-bilingual organizers come from Mexican-American backgrounds. Yet thus far they seem to have limited support within their own community. In January, when Unz kicked off the petition campaign in Tucson, he got a hostile reception from local Hispanics, who greatly outnumbered the tiny *English for the Children* group.

Spanish-speakers and Indians over age 40 have bitter memories of the 'sink-or-swim' treatment – no support in the native language and no special help in learning English – which was routine for minority children throughout the Southwest. Most fell behind and many dropped out. Before Tucson adopted bilingual education in the late 1960s, its high-school graduation rate for Hispanics never topped 40%. Today, it is 91%.

Still, if the *Proposition 227* campaign is any guide, pedagogical successes alone cannot shield bilingual programs from political attack. Arizona's Superintendent of Public Instruction, Lisa Graham Keegan, recently blamed bilingual education for the state's low reading scores, even though native-language instruction is available to only a minority of English language learners. Meanwhile, the Arizona legislature voted to impose a three-year limit on children's enrollment in bilingual programs, despite state figures showing that many students need more time to acquire academic English.

Fortunately, Arizona's advocates for bilingualism do have the California experience to analyze and avoid. Already activists are getting organized to educate voters about the pedagogical issues involved, the value of bilingualism, and the high stakes for children.

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More information on developments in the USA can be found on James Crawford 's Language Policy Web Site at http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/jwcrawford/

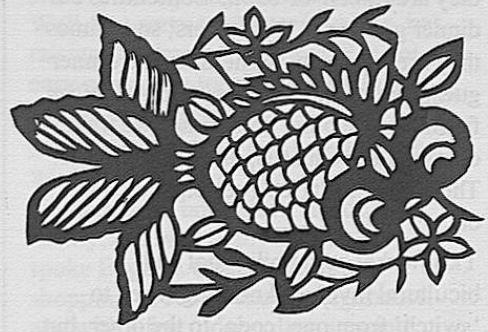
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Eating Habits in East and West

Picture this: a young Japanese man sprinkles a packet of instant *o-chazuke* (dried green tea and seaweed) over a bowl of rice, adds hot water, and inhales the whole bowlful of food in eleven seconds flat while making extremely loud slurping and gurgling noises. This scenario is from one of the most popular television commercials in Japan at the moment. While Japanese commercials for foods and drinks regularly include eating noises, this one sets a new record for loud continuous slurping.

As a child growing up in the US, I was regularly reminded that making loud slurping noises at the dinner table was a definite no-no. Since so much of American culture has European roots, I assume that admonitions against noisy eating habits are familiar to many of the readers of this Newsletter, as well.

Well, such admonitions aren't common here in Japan. In fact, proper etiquette regarding noise during a meal in Japan is often the exact opposite of that in the US. Japanese table manners actually **require** one to make loud slurping noises when eating foods such as *o-chazuke, ramen* noodles, and the like. The slurp sound is



a sign that the food is delicious. Not slurping is rude – it implies that the food tastes bad. There's no mistaking the message of the TV commercial in question – that guy really likes his *o-chazuke.*

After many years of living in Japan, I have gotten used to doing most things Japanese. I speak the language. I eat virtually all Japanese foods, including *ba-sashi* (raw horse meat). Naturally, I use chopsticks. I regularly bow to others, even to other motorists and to pedestrians when I'm driving my car.

But still I have a hard time bringing myself to slurp. And I have an even harder time doing it with gusto the way the locals do.

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FOOD...*Continued from page three*

I remember visiting my friend Tom who lives in the US. His wife, Yasuko, is Japanese. For lunch Yasuko made noodles, and we only got about one minute into the meal before she made a point of reminding me that 'slurping is permitted' when eating a Japanese meal. That was a nice way of saying, 'I'm waiting for you to make a noise.' Of course, I knew about Japanese slurping etiquette – I was just hoping since we were in the US and since Tom was an American that perhaps the Japanese rule didn't apply. After Yasuko's reminder, I made a few sounds and managed to get through the meal without any further prompting. But I know that Yasuko took my lack of heartfelt gastronomic accompaniment as an insult to her cooking even though I later told her in words how much I liked the meal.

My wife is Japanese and we live in Japan. As a parent of a bilingual-bicultural daughter (age 9), I find that the table manners issue comes up frequently, especially around the family dining table. Sometimes we have Western fare. Sometimes we have Japanese. Sometimes we eat with silverware and sometimes with chopsticks. Sometimes the noodles are spaghetti and sometimes they are *ramen* or *soba*. Sometimes our dinner guests are Westerners; sometimes they are Japanese. Sometimes the dinner guests are mixed Japanese and American families, like ours. Sometimes we travel overseas and eat at Japanese restaurants. The list of scenarios goes on and on and on.

I know that being bilingual and bicultural involves knowing when to 'switch' from one 'code' to the other, but I find that the situations surrounding the appropriateness of making noises at the dinner table can get very complex at times. One thing is for sure, however – I often find myself asking my daughter to eat more quietly when we eat together at home, especially when we have Western food and she uses silverware to eat it.

I'm curious to know what experiences other readers have had with eating habits, table manners, and other forms of etiquette that are drastically different between cultures – especially when it involves children.

David Carlson

Contact details removed

Spotlight on the Editorial Board

Rose Aghdami from England

Husband: Esmail Aghdami
Children: Daniel (19), Sara (18), Sophie (13), Benjamin (12).
Country you live in: We now live in England again, having returned in 1995 from Switzerland where we lived for eight years.
Country you come from: I was born in Sweden (English mother, Swedish father), but was brought up in England as my family moved here when I was 3 years old.
Languages spoken in the family: We speak mainly English together, with some Swiss-German now and then. My children became bilingual in Switzerland through having one home language (English) and one community/school language (Swiss-German), whereas I was brought up bilingually by having two languages (Swedish and English) at home. It has been interesting to compare their experiences with mine!

What did you like most about Switzerland? Apart from the chocolate ... it has to be the beautiful scenery – especially the mountains. The surroundings are lovely all over the country, and the Swiss work hard to keep them that way. There is an emphasis on recycling and reducing pollution and a great respect for the environment which is encouraged from an early age. The public transport system is fantastic – trains are clean and run on time, and connecting buses are timetabled to make journeys easy.

What did you dislike most about Switzerland? The rigidity of thinking and the lack of flexibility. The extent of the attention to detail can sometimes seem petty, but having said that it's exactly this attitude that keeps everything working well and of a high standard – anything less just isn't tolerated!

What about the food? The emphasis is on wholesome cooking. It's not unusual for husbands to return home for lunch, and as the schools generally don't serve lunch, children are home to eat too. The smells of home cooking are mouthwatering at midday! Many shops close over lunchtime too – the midday meal is still regarded as an important time of day. Children are taught about nutrition and cookery at school which encourages them to value traditional cooking. They will often have a bread roll rather than a chocolate bar for a snack – but then the bread in Switzerland is delicious!

What about the humour?
The Swiss are generally thought to lack a sense of humour but I think it is because they don't expect to find humour potentially in almost every situation or exchange, as we do in England. A spontaneous joke is taken literally, requiring a good deal of explanation! However, there is a good deal of laughter to be heard in Switzerland so I think the humour is simply different, rather than lacking.

How do you find Swiss men and women? Although Switzerland is well known for being modern, this aspect of life is seen more in terms of external surroundings (decor, architecture, design) than in attitudes. They are often surprisingly conservative, and the economy and infrastructure encourage the traditional roles of men and women to continue. So men will be the breadwinners, and women will often stay at home to care for the children. School hours are irregular, so it can be difficult for mothers to work outside the home. I would say, however, that the role of housewife has more respect than it does in England.

How does the upbringing of children differ from in England? Children are freer to play outside and walk to and from school on their own than they are here, and so can be more independent. There is more emphasis on children enjoying their early years through play, and less pressure for young children to 'achieve'. Kindergarten, from 5 - 7 years, is very much a place for children to socialise and play, leaving reading and number work firmly on one side until school starts at the age of 7. The general feeling is that the pressure starts soon enough!

How do your children feel about their identity? When I asked them about this, they all said that they feel neither particularly Swiss nor particularly English, but feel that their sense of identity reflects what they are. That is, children who have spent a good deal of their lives in another country, experiencing that there are different ways of doing the same things! They feel fond of and loyal to both places, and their fluency in both English and Swiss-German means that they can feel at home in either country.

What is your children's prefered language? As time goes on and they spend more of their lives in England, they feel more up-to-date with English teenage culture and language. They are not exposed to this aspect of Swiss-German to the same extent any more, although our frequent visits to Switzerland are valuable in keeping them informed of the latest Swiss buzz-words – usually derived from English!

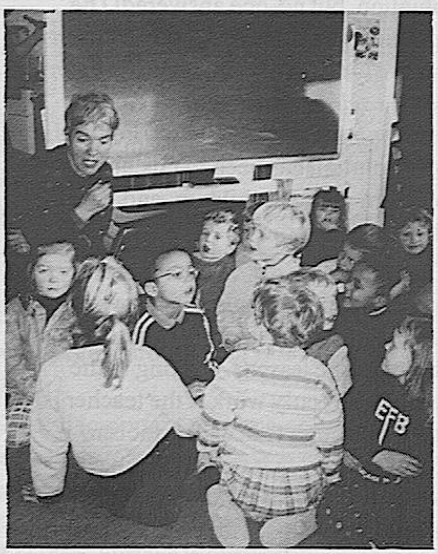
What was your most memorable cross-cultural blunder? On my son's birthday I had taken a novelty birthday cake into Kindergarten for the children to share – but none of the children wanted a piece. Why not? They were unused to coloured butter icing and thought that the yellow Bart Simpson birthday cake was covered in mustard!

PLAYGROUP BECOMES SUCCESSFUL FRENCH LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Marjukka Grover

A Small portable classroom at the grounds of St Ursula's High School in Bristol is the happy home of **Ecole Française de Bristol**, a small, independently run school for children from French speaking homes. The school, however, is not only for bilingual children – it runs classes for English speaking children too (French being the most popular foreign language in English schools). The school has two main objectives:

1. To offer French-speaking children the opportunity to follow the French curriculum in the nursery section, and offer linguistic support in primary and secondary level.
2. To give English speaking children the opportunity to learn French from the age of three



Story time

Four days a week bilingual French/ English children aged 3-5 are taught to play, sing and converse entirely in French. The rule is *French only* in the premises of the school. If the children start playing in English one of the staff gently steers the conversation back to French. The children soon learn the rules: 'No English', they remind the headteacher, Jackie Winter, if she speaks English to a visitor or explains something to a new monolingual English child.

Bilingual children aged 6-9 years attend the **Ecole Française** on a day release basis. These children are in ordinary English primary schools four days a week, but every Friday they come to **Ecole Française** to do their schooling in French. This scheme, which puts emphases on reading, writing and oral expression in French, helps the children to develop a high level of bilingualism.

The school also caters for monolingual English children who are keen to learn French. Some of the children start at the full-time nursery class, becoming rapidly bilingual by absorbing the language around them. Others attend once a week for an immersion nursery class to learn French with other monolingual English-speaking children – mixing with the French speaking children during the breaks. Although the aim of the immersion class is not bilingualism, these children will have a head start in French when they begin learning it in school. The school-age children take part in after-school French classes and activities, which also run during school holidays. The aim of these activities is to give children the basic French vocabulary necessary to communicate in everyday situations.

The school started in 1980 as a playgroup, organised by three French mothers to provide linguistic support after noticing how rapidly their children where losing French when attending English-speaking nursery and school. The playgroup gathered once a week but the demand was so great that the group soon developed into a part-time nursery and primary school with a qualified French teacher. Today the school has altogether 150 pupils, some in full-time nursery, some in part-time nursery or school class. There are two fully qualified teachers, both native speaks of French, a nursery assistant and an administrator. The school gets a small grant from the French government but is otherwise self-financed. Parents pay a modest fee per term and the support group organises fund-raising events. Like any other school, **Ecole Française** is regularly assessed by British school inspectors, therefore high standards must be maintained. The school advertises in *Yellow pages*, in the county school magazine (which is sent to every school in the area), posters are placed in public libraries, and the French Embassy has details of the school for those interested.

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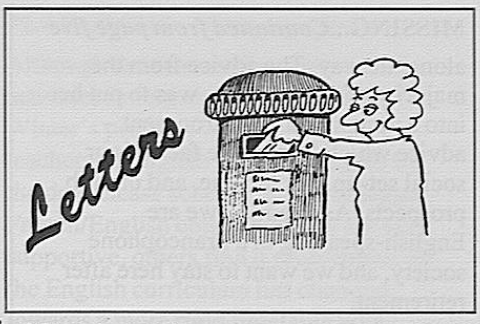

Missing Linguistic Genes?

Having been a rather passive reader of the Newsletter for several years now, I am finally compelled to write to you on several points raised in some of your issues.

When our first child was still an infant, I read two books on bilingualism, one of which (written by two linguists) gave a very positive image of the subject, whilst the other, written by an 'ordinary' person, like myself, proposed that, whereas 50% of children seem to have no problem in becoming bilingual, the other 50% do indeed experience problems of varying degrees.

Like many of your readers, I suspect, our friends and family thought it was great that our children should have the opportunity of being brought up bilingually. *'They will pick up French so easily, by playing with the kids on the street'*, was a pretty common attitude. Well, I'm sorry to shatter illusions, but raising children to be bilingual is not so easy-peasy as a lot a people seem to simplistically believe.

My husband is Irish and I am English. We met in Belgium, and our two children were born there. Inside the family, and with many friends, we spoke English. Outside the home – shopping, creche, school, neighbours, and with a few close colleagues and friends – our language was French. Stephanie was 5 years and Patrick was nearly 3 when we moved to French-speaking Switzerland, five years ago.

We have two children as different as chalk and cheese in several fundamental ways, but they had essentially the same upbringing. Patrick had no delay in language development, whereas Stephanie had a history of problems (her first clear word was at 17 months, and at 3 ½ years old she still was very inarticulate). For the last ten years, we have battled (I cannot supply a better word) to ensure that Stephanie learns French, and makes friends with local children. We have consulted psychologists and speech therapists all

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MISSING...*Continued from page five*

along the way. The advice from the majority of these experts was to put her into a monolingual environment – advice which flew in the face of our social set-up, our income, and our job prospects. As a family, we are English-speaking in a Francophone society, and we want to stay here after retirement.

Stephanie had a 'blockage' against French, and successfully resisted speaking French for five years at school (from 2 ½ to 7½ !) Finally, on the advice of one psychologist (to whom I am forever grateful), I started speaking French at home. Within six months, she started speaking French. The problem was, that, one year further on, she felt better in French than in English, and has systematically been reluctant to speak in English ever since.

"Well, I'm sorry to shatter illusions, but raising children to be bilingual is not so easy-peasy as a lot a people seem to simplistically believe."

In your Newsletter you talk often about cooperation between parents, but what do you have to say when one parent is not a verbal person, and will not or cannot help his children linguistically? All too often your Newsletter transmits letters from people who are linguists, but a lot of us out here do not have this miraculous gene in our blood, and neither do our children.

Five years on in Switzerland (in a most rigid education system), Stephanie is average in her class, thanks to a lot of private lessons and help from various sources (including two years of speech-therapy/semiophony at 3 hours per week). Her brother is doing well for himself both socially and academically, but both children speak English with a French structure, and are very hesitant in both languages. Their comprehension is good in both languages, but both (especially Stephanie) tend to be denigrated by the teachers for their lack of ability in expression.

On quite a different point, you often talk of the extended family in your Newsletter, but not all of us have this back-up. In our case, we are a nuclear family, all grand-parents having died long before the children were born, and we have little contact with our families

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COMMENTS

Learning English as a Foreign Language

As a translator, the mother of a German/English child, as the wife of an ex-teacher of English and as someone who has been through the German school system, I know exactly what Jamie Weiss meant when she wrote that her sons are 'confused at having to translate as a monolingual German child would do.' (see Vol. 15, No. 4)

Students of English are only too often required to 'translate' completely artificial source texts into completely artificial target texts. Bilingual children acquire their languages naturally. They never come upon meaningless, unreal texts designed by grammarians for the purpose of incorporating specific language problems until they attend second-language classes at school.

Monolingual children would not be able to tell the difference between an authentic and a fabricated sample of a new language and are more likely to have a consciously structural approach to the undertaking anyway. Bilingual children, however, having a genuine sense of what the language is about, will naturally rebel against these alien synthetic linguistic constructs in their textbooks, which bear no relation to the truly living mother or father tongue in their minds.

Jamie Weiss' problem is universal: good teachers are extremely rare. If she is full of determination she might eventually find a school where the quality of teaching is of a higher standard. If she is philosophical and 'wise', she might console herself that her sons' confusion is a good sign, and she might try to get the message across to them that they must please the teacher and write bad English so as to attain better marks. I don't know which of these suggestions would be better suited for them. I only know that I'd find it very difficult to accept the limitations of the German school system.

Edith Steffen, Woking, England.

How can parents help?

I think the basic problem bilingual children face when they are taught their mother tongue as foreign language is that foreign language teaching methods are not appropriate with native speakers. They use a simplified form of the language which is not quite wrong, but not really natural either.

Later on, when children have to produce more complex language, the child's English may actually be better than the teacher's in some respects. My elder daughter (now 14) has this problem: she is studying the French secondary school curriculum, which includes English, by distance learning. The teacher who marks her English work has often 'corrected' expressions which were correct to begin with. At other times, the teacher has changed wording or tenses which were good idiomatic English.

Back in 1996 (BFN, Vol. 13, No. 4) I asked what other parents do in this situation, but no-one answered! The question still stands: '*What is the best course for parents to take to maintain the child's self-confidence without undermining the teacher's?*' For us the only solution has been to talk about the problem with the children, and wait for things to get better.

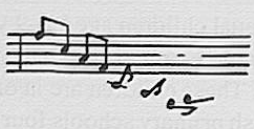
Changing schools is often not an option. Some schools will allow the children to move up into a higher class for language lessons. Talking to the teacher will only work if the teacher is mature enough to accept criticism. Teachers may fear that accepting correction from a child may undermine their authority with the rest of the class.

Maybe the best hope is to raise the issue in a professional publication for the teachers of English as a foreign language. Teachers cannot alter their entire teaching because of one child: but at least they can recognise that children who are native speakers are frustrated by the constraints of producing 'learner' English, and make allowances.

Alathea Anderssohn, Morocco.

HUMOUR, HUMOUR, HUMOUR

Katrin, arriving home from school 45 minutes early after a music lesson had been cancelled, said 'Music fell out today' (*ausfallen* = to be cancelled).



Charmian Bilger, Osnabrück, Germany.

Bilingualism not too late

I am sure it isn't too late for Anna (BFN, Vol. 16, No. 1) to start raising her 19-month-old son bilingually. Like her, after living in England for 12 years, I found it very difficult to speak my mother tongue (Finnish), to my newborn son.

However, I persisted speaking 'rusty' Finnish to him, as I felt it was important for my parents to be able to communicate with their grandson. There were times when I actually resented this 'obligation'. Gradually it became easier and when we realised that Jack understood both English and Finnish, I felt more motivated. By the time Jack was two, he spoke both languages well for his age.

Now, almost four, Jack often mixes the two languages when speaking to me, as he knows I understand both. His total language use is very imaginative and creative. I realise that his minority language will always be weaker than English, but I think that is good enough.

I find that my own Finnish has improved and I am rediscovering Finnish culture. Bilingualism has given Jack a wonderful gift of another window on the world. I cannot imagine now ever wanting to deprive him of that!

Ulla Hietala-Beavers, Isle of Man.

PROPOSITION ... *from page two*

whom Standard English is a second dialect.

Several important research efforts are underway to address these issues so that policy makers, teachers and parents can be better informed about the impact of *227* (see 'Further Information'). Once reports for these research efforts become available, we will better be able to assess the real impact of *Proposition 227* on California's 1.4 million children.

The potentially negative impact of *227* in California is being accentuated by several other 'reform' efforts that are likewise relatively insensitive to the special needs of language minority children. For example, standardized testing only in English has also been mandated, beginning in Grade 3. Unless students are able to achieve a passing score, they will be retained and not promoted to Grade 4. Such policies also fail to allow all children to build on the resources they bring with them. In conclusion, the state's new emphases on English-only and standardized testing puts many languages at risk from policies and practices that seek one-size-fits-all solutions for their diverse needs. Such policies also fail to acknowledge and build on the resources children bring with them to school.

Terrence Wiley is Professor of Education & Linguistics at California State University, CSULB Long Beach and a Faculty Affiliate with CSULB's Center for Language Minority Education and Research.

For Further Information:

Several legal challenges to 227 are currently being litigated. For additional information and policy updates, see James Crawford's informative web site at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JWCRAWFORD/>.

For background on immigrant and language minority education issues in the United States, see the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) at http://www.cal.org.

Regarding a broad range of issues dealing with diversity, see California Tomorrow's site at <http://www.californiatomorrow.org/cgi-bin/toc.asp>

* For information on English Language Development, ELD, Standards see http://www.cde.ca.gov/cilbranch/sca/eld/eld.html.

Professor J. David Ramirez of the Center for Language Minority Education and Research at California State University, Long Beach is undertaking a statewide survey of all public school districts in the state. See http://www.clmer.csulb.edu/.

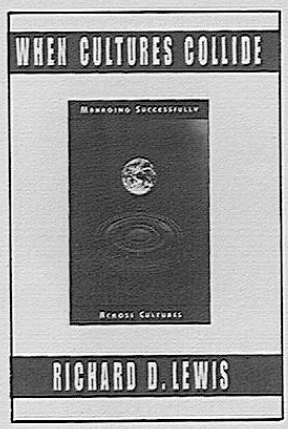
Recently, the University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute hosted a conference that was focused solely on the implementation of Proposition 227.

See http://lmrinet.education.ucsb.edu/.

PLAYGROUP... *from page five*

Although the demand for after-school activities in French is high, Jackie Winter's problem is to get the head-teachers of English schools to agree to the day release scheme for the bilingual French/English children. Some are very supportive, others find it problematic as the English curriculum has changed towards a more rigid timetable with testing starting in the first year of primary school. The other problem is to fulfil parents expectations. Many monolingual English-speaking parents expect their children to produce French in a very short time and are disappointed when the child does not want to show off. Yet at the right time and in the right context the same child will surprise everyone with the skills he/she has acquired (see BFN Vol.15:3, 98).

George, a lively four-year-old, asked me if I was bilingual. When I explained that yes I was, but not French/English he became very curious about my language. 'I can speak French and English but not Finnish' he said and asked me to teach him some Finnish? *Kiitos* (thank you) did not cause any problems and *hei hei* (bye, bye) he though was really simple. 'Now it is your turn' George said 'say *bonjour*'. When I tried he smiled patiently and corrected 'No, not like that, say *bo-un-jhur*'. At least I must have got the pronunciation of *au revoir* right since the whole class turned towards me and waved as I was leaving.



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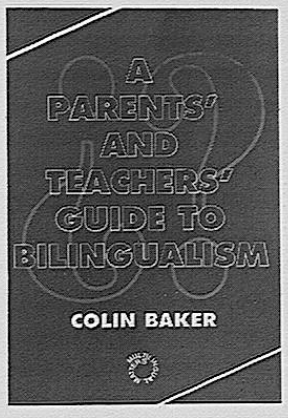

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Anita Marshall, *Parent*

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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 types of families with whom you would like to get in touch.**

The following people would like to get in touch with either same combination language families or other bilingual families in their area.

Contact details removed

HELP, HELP HELP...
Mrs M. F. Kahramanoglou is an MA student researching Greek home language maintenance. Her particular area of interest is how and why the language is maintained abroad. Considering that language is frequently lost with the second generation, why is becoming bilingual/maintaining home language so important? The research will be conducted through questionnaires. Could parents who are bringing up their children bilingually Greek/ English and who are willing to help get in touch with her.

Contact details removed

MISSING LINGUISTIC GENES .... *from page five*

on both sides, mainly for financial reasons. How do your other readers cope in this situation

Economically and socially we are committed to bilingualism, but we have known several families who have given up and their children remain basically monolingual. It seems to me that these statistics do not show up in most bilingual studies, which, inevitabily, concentrate on children from families with an inbuilt linguistics ability.

Linda Lloyd, Borex, Switzerland.