The Bilingual Family Newsletter

MULTILINGUAL MATTERS

News and Views for Intercultural People

Editor: **Marjukka Grover**

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In this issue

EDITORIAL

September 11th events shook the whole world and what followed has made most of us uneasy about the future. Whether we believe fighting the 'war' against terrorism with guns is right or not there is not much an ordinary person can do at a political level, except join the pressure groups for or against the 'war'. But there is something each one of us CAN do. We can teach our children to understand people of different race, religion, language and customs. With our own example we can show that diversity in a society is enriching. Friendships with 'strangers'– those who speak with a foreign accent, who don't dress quite like us, whose food is different, who worship in mosques, temples, synagogues or churches – give us real understanding of the ever shrinking world and its rich cultures.

In this issue's main article Michael Rosanova reflects on the thoughts of leading educationalists whith regards to what makes children emotionally healthy, to become empathetic and tolerant adults. Our future depends on these children – that's why we can't ignore the issue.

Marjukka Grover

Seasons Greetings!

BRINGING STUART HOME: PARENTS, CHILDREN AND TERRORISM

M.J. Rosanova

As E.B. White's children's story, *Stuart Little*, opens Mr and Mrs Little are about to be led into the common room of a New York City orphanage. They have decided to open their family to a second child, a little brother for their son, George. The orphan who catches their eye, and then captures their hearts, is Stuart. Mr and Mrs Little immediately realize that Stuart is unlike any of the other children at the orphanage: bright, witty and remarkably resilient in a special way. They admire

> *"The emotional health of children is critical, because it is only with the closing of the 'feelings gap' that cultural awareness and multilingual ability can begin to support larger visions of peace and global harmony."*

Stuart and can somehow see the best of themselves in this child, a kinship deeper than mere genetics. And so they somehow fail to take note that Stuart is, well, a *mouse*. But then so do the administrators at the orphanage. The adoption is approved.

To celebrate the adoption, members of the Little family from around the New York area come to a party at the Littles' home. The mood is festive as various aunts and uncles arrive. But when Stuart is introduced, the relatives are shocked into silence. Mr Little's brother speaks up first to say, 'But Stuart is a ....'. Dead silence. But then an aunt interrupts to complete the sentence: '... adorable'. Yes, Stuart is adorable. The relatives then proceed with the party as though nothing unusual has occurred, presenting gifts for the new member of the family: a bowling ball, a bicycle, a family heirloom baseball, and so on. But the Littles' elder son, George, a child of five or so, can finally contain himself no longer. He bursts forth to recall his family to reality. ' Stuart is *not* my brother,' George declares with bitter conviction.'Stuart is a *mouse*.'

Why does George feel this way? Why is it that for George, kinship is *not* deeper than the accidents of genetics? In the days following the terrorist attacks on New York City, Washington, D.C. and rural Pennsylvania, we parents are called to reflection, we are called to action. For the revenge of terrorists, both metaphorical and literal, begins with the frustrations and suffering typical of small children who no longer trust that they are safe; children who have lost faith that life can be fair.

Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson argued that human newborns are more fragile, more dependent for longer and require more intensive initial care, than other newborns of the vast majority of species on our planet. Those human newborns who manage to establish relationships, attracting the affection of available caregivers, are more likely to survive, to flourish, to develop a sense of basic trust. For Erikson the development of a sense of basic *trust* is the bedrock foundation for the construction of human personality (Erikson, 1950/1963: 247–251). And for Protestant theologian Rheinhold Niebuhr the *inability* to trust

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BRINGING ... *from page one*

is the beginning of evil, the corruption of the human potential for relationships, the human potential for good (Niebuhr, 1974: 76–84).

There are many causes for war, for violence, for senseless brutality, over which we parents have little-if any-control. But one of the deepest and ultimately most profound roots of violence is the injustice of what Goleman calls 'emotionally inept parenting' (Goleman, 1990: 190), or what Montessori and others have referred to, more generally, as 'developmentally inappropriate practice' in education.

It was Montessori who argued that mankind's path to peace lies within children. '*The unsatisfied needs of the child leave their mark on the adult, emerging as inhibitions that prevent genuine intellectual development and weaken the moral character. Adults who have been brought up in this way are not prepared to love others and to join with them in striving for a better life. Rather, their education has prepared them for incidents of conquest, indeed of war. For, in reality, the cause of war does not lie in armaments, but in the adults who make use of them.*' (Montessori, 1943/ 1992).

> *"Love and loyalty are more powerful than differences of language, culture and race.It is our calling as parents to help our children understand this not only in their heads but in their hearts and in their bones."*

In a very real sense, the enemy of peace is the extinction of the capacity for empathy in children, the common origin of bullies and of the children who follow them. (Goleman, 1990: 196–7, 234–9). Eventually, both the bullies and those who tolerate them turn into adults. And bullies grown large are not the only ones to fear. '*The child who has never learned to act alone, to direct his own actions, to govern her own will, grows into an adult who is easily led and must always lean upon others.*' (Montessori, 1943/1992.)

There are both children and adults who react to the events of September 11th with the assumption that all Arabs or all Muslims are terrorists. And within the Islamic world, there are those who assume that the West is inherently corrupt, a sworn enemy of the search for virtue and truth. Within such children and adults, there is not only a 'knowledge gap' but more crucially a 'feelings gap'. Objective information will begin to make an impact on such people only when the 'feelings gap' has begun to heal. As McFarland argues: '*The happier children are with themselves, the more likely they are to reach out and interact co-operatively with others. As the children's confidence in self increases, their ability to be interdependent and part of a community increases, also. From a sense of community or interdependence, the children can glimpse, on a micro scale, the unity off all peoples. From this experience, perhaps their level of trust will be heightened.*' (McFarland, 1988).

The emotional health of children is critical, because it is only with the closing of the 'feelings gap' that cultural awareness and multilingual ability can begin to support larger visions of peace and global harmony. With its step-by-step descriptions of individual projects and group activities, *Celebrations of Life* (Meyer & Seldin, 1988) is one of the most interesting and practical guides to the stimulation of multicultural awareness in children as young as the pre-school years. But a curriculum guide of this kind is meaningless without the kind of framework contemplated by Wolf in *Nurturing the Spirit in Non-sectarian Classrooms* (1996). Wolf's work offers a wealth of step-by-step descriptions of individual projects and group activities, which parents and teachers can use to facilitate both emotional health and cultural awareness in their children.

During the course of the story of *Stuart Little*, the elder son, George, becomes embroiled in a struggle with a bully concerning Stuart who is, truth be told, a mouse. But in the heat of his battle against the bully, George exclaims (perhaps to his own surprise), 'That's no mouse; that's my brother!' For in the end, as George's parents tacitly aver, kinship is deeper than genetics. Love and loyalty are more powerful than differences of language, culture and race. It is our calling as parents to help our children understand this not only in their heads but in their hearts and in their bones.

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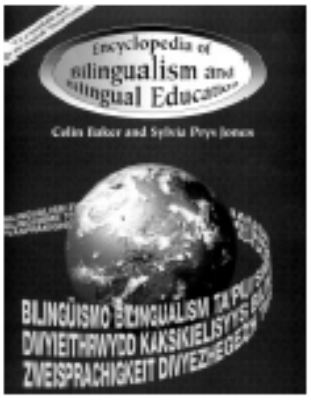
BILINGUALISM AND CREATIVE THINKING

The following is extract from ***Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education****, by Colin Baker and Sylvia Prys Jones. The extract is published by kind permission from the authors.*



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Does bilingualism affect a person's cognitive style. i.e. methods of sorting out information, remembering, transforming and using information? If a bilingual stores and processes two languages inside the thinking quarters, does that have any effects on the way bilinguals think in the classroom, in everyday conversations or in internal cerebral activity?

IQ tests require children to find the one correct answer to each question. This is often called convergent thinking. Children have to converge onto the sole acceptable answer. An alternative style of thinking is called divergent or creative thinking. Some people seem to have a more free, open-ended, elastic, imaginative and creative form of thinking. Instead of finding the one correct answer, divergent thinkers prefer a variety of answers, all of which may be valid.

To probe divergent thinking, simple and straightforward questions are used. For example 'How many uses can you think for a brick?' 'How many interesting and unusual uses can you think of for a cardboard box?' On this open-ended kind of question a student has to diverge and think of imaginative answers – as many as possible.

A Convergent thinker tends to produce a few, fundamental answers to the question. A converge may say that the bricks can be used to build houses, build a wall, and build a barbecue. The diverge tends rapidly to produce a large

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An Englishwoman abroad comes home

I lived in Luxembourg from 1981 until 1998 – not all that far as the crow flies. But, for family reasons, from 1986 until 1997 I was not able to get back to England for a holiday. During that time, my mother sold up and moved to Spain. That was awful. I felt as though I no longer had any roots, as though I had a huge void behind me that I would fall into at any moment.

One of my problems is that I had never lived for very long in one part of the British Isles and I had no place to call 'home'. As many of your readers may remember, I wrote to you often about my struggles, in a difficult environment, to teach my sons some of the old English traditions and to cook them some 'English' food. We spoke English together, and, though the boys were brought up bilingually (French/English), I was keen for them to know about other languages as well.

I returned to the UK for three years in June 1998. I was never aware of a cultural shock when I left England to go and live in France for six years or Luxembourg for seventeen years. So I was surprised to feel as uncomfortable as a fish out of water when I came 'home'. Anyone would think I had lived on another planet rather than another EU member country!

The first problem was proving my existence. Neither of the two credit agencies currently used to check on one's credentials in the UK was aware that I existed because I had not purchased anything in the UK on credit. While living abroad, I had kept the UK bank account that I had held for over 20 years. My credit card of over 25 years was also based in the UK, so it never occurred to me that as a long-standing customer their word would not be good enough. However, because I had had no address in the UK and was not therefore on an electoral role – I simply did not exist!

The first year was extremely uncomfortable. I realise that had I been returning home as a pensioner, I might not have had quite so many problems. As an

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NEWS FROM THE USA
Census 2000: Few Surprises

James Crawford

Nearly one in five Americans speaks a language other than English at home, according to a preliminary report from the year 2000 Census. Editorialists were predictably stunned by the news. Several seized the opportunity to blame bilingual education for the expanding number of limited-English speakers.

Yet no one who had been paying attention should have been surprised by the growth of language diversity. The trend has been clear since the 1980s, when immigration began to transform American communities in a variety of ways. Of these, bilingualism was perhaps the most obvious – as reported in the previous decennial census.

The latest data show patterns for the 1990s that are remarkably similar to those for the 1980s. In both decades, the number of U.S. residents who reported speaking a language other than English at home grew by roughly 40%. So did the number of minority language speakers who spoke English 'very well,' along with the number who had some difficulty with English. Meanwhile, the foreign-born population increased at similar rates – 40% in the 1980s, 54% in the 1990s. It is not hard to see that immigration is the major force driving language trends.

Census 2000 provides further evidence that:

* Language-minority populations are growing at far greater rates than the native-English-speaking population – more than seven times as fast in the 1990s.

* Immigration shows no sign of slowing down: in both 1990 and 2000, 44% of the foreign-born had arrived within the past ten years.

* Fluency in English is increasing at least as rapidly as language diversity.

This is hardly rocket science. Yet most U.S. media, absorbed in the controversy over bilingual education, managed to miss these points. *The Washington Post*, for example, bemoaned the 'shamefully low' English proficiency of Spanish-speaking children – relative to what standard, it failed to specify – and accused the public schools of teaching them 'mainly in Spanish.'

Such alarmism is misplaced. The latest data show that, since 1990, minority language speakers aged 5-17 increased by 55%, while limited-English speakers increased by just 25%. Among U.S. schoolchildren, bilingualism is clearly on the rise.

One caveat: The latest figures come from the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, which is based on a sample of 700,000 households. More precise estimates of language usage, based on a sample of 20 million households, are scheduled to be released by early 2003.

For more information, visit James Crawford's Language Policy Web Site: http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/jwcrawford/.

Language Spoken at Home, Self-Reported English-Speaking Ability, and Nativity of U.S. Residents - 1980, 1990, and 2000

	1980	%	1990	%	Change in 1980s	2000	%	Change in 1990s
All speakers, age 5 and older	210,247,455	100.0	230,445,777	100.0	**9.6%**	254,762,734	100.0	**10.6%**
English only	187,187,415	89.0	198,600,798	86.2	**6.1%**	209,817,282	82.4	**5.6%**
Language other than English	23,060,040	11.0	31,844,979	13.8	**38.1%**	44,945,452	17.6	**41.1%**
Speaks English very well	12,879,004	6.1	17,862,477	7.8	**38.7%**	25,419,219	10.0	**42.3%**
Speaks English with difficulty	10,181,036	4.8	13,982,502	6.1	**37.3%**	19,526,233	7.7	**39.6%**
Foreign-born*	14,079,906	6.2	19,767,316	7.9	**40.4%**	30,522,685	10.8	**54.4%**

Sources: 1980 Census of Population, Vol. 1, chap. D, pt. 1 (PC80-1-D1-A); U.S. Census Bureau, *Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for United States, Regions, and States: 1990* (1990 CPH-L-133); Census 2000 Supplementary Survey (released 6 August 2001)

*Foreign-born percentages are calculated based on all age groups of the U.S. population.

ENGLISH WOMAN... *from page 3*

'EU student' I was not entitled to a grant – in all honesty I had not expected to need one. In spite of being British by birth (from a long line of Britons-by-birth), I had not lived in Britain for the three years prior to my attendance at university. And that was that. Discrimination? Oh yes, I know how it feels. I'm a woman, I am not young, and I am a student.

I lived on the Wirral from the age of five until I was sixteen. So coming to the north-west of England was in a way like 'coming home' – the people speak in a way that I am familiar with. I was offered

"And as for the food, I have to admit I went on a year-long binge. I ate all the things I had craved for so long - pies, chips, cakes, scones, puddings - Yorkshire as well as suet, meat and sweet!"

a place at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston. I felt at ease at once – the people in the north-west are as kind and friendly as I remembered them. That certainly helped.

And as for the food, I have to admit I went on a year-long binge. I ate all the things I had craved for so long – pies, chips, cakes, scones, puddings – Yorkshire as well as suet, meat and sweet! Yet I could not find a good old English apple, pear, plum or potato for love or money. On the other hand, my weight went up and I'm now having dreadful trouble losing it.

I found it quite hard to come to terms with the new language that has sprung up since I left. New words, phrases and new ways of spelling words were a constant reminder that I speak rather old-fashioned English.

One of the things that shocked me most was the nation's new favourite past time – shopping! The BBC – that upholder of serious entertainment, originally set up, it has to be said, with the aim of selling radio sets – actually presented a programme from Manchester's Trafford Centre on how to shop! I was as fascinated as a rabbit by a snake.

Television programmes in general seemed to be the same old rubbish with the occasional excellent documentary, news programme or, my favourite – old black and white films. Two more channels had been added. Luckily I was able to catch

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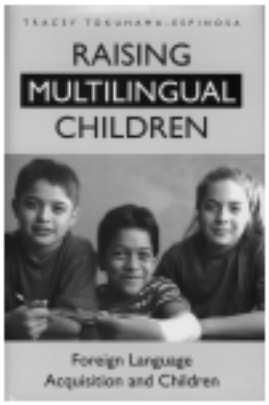
BOOK REVIEW

Raising Multilingual Children by Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa

Reviewed by Susanne Barron-Hauwaert



Several books have been written for bilingual families – De Jong, Arnberg, Harding and Riley, Baker, and most recently Andersson. However, there was often a lack of advice for families living with *three or more* languages. In this new book Tracey links the issues of multilingualism and bringing up children with the latest research in neurological and scientific studies.

Tracey, an American with Japanese roots, is married to an Ecuadorian diplomat. They have brought up their three young children in Ecuador, Japan, America and Switzerland. She taught and counselled children in international schools in Quito and Tokyo. Tracey has practical experience of a mixed-language marriage, living as a short-term expatriate abroad in a third-language country and balancing family life with language acquisition. As the final chapter 'Diary Accounts of My Own Children's Development' shows, life has not been easy with an ever-changing linguistic environment.

Each chapter has a cookery theme – Ingredients, Baking Instructions, Kitchen Design, The Chefs ... I found this organisation rather messy and confusing. It distracts from the basic theme of the book which is The Ten Key Factors. These key factors are: Timing and the Windows of Opportunity, Aptitude for Languages, Motivation, Strategy, Consistency, Opportunity and Support, Linguistic Relationship between the First and Second Languages, Siblings, Gender, and Hand Use.

In the Windows of Opportunity chapter Tracey explains that the First Window (from birth to 9 months) is when all languages are simply acquired by a baby as its 'first' language. The Second Window (from age 4-8 years) is the 'best time to introduce a second language to a monolingual, or a third language to a bilingual child'. The Third Window is from age 8 onwards. Language learning now needs support from home, school and peer group friends if it is to be successful. This knowledge of Windows could help parents wishing to 'add on' a third language to a bilingual child, or parents moving countries, who need to consider the child's age.

Tracey recommends Consistency, particularly with the *one-parent-one language* approach and using the school, babysitters, local friends and extra classes such as ballet or judo to reinforce any other languages. Tracey also lists seven Strategies, with combinations of two or three language from parents and the community. A useful Family Language Profile and Family Language Goals table helps families clarify their child's linguistic development and areas to work on.

I recommend this book to families living with three or more languages, and also to monolingual or bilingual families curious to know more. Tracey shows, with over ninety case-studies of families, that successful multilingualism is more common than we think, and it is a growing phenomenon. This positive-thinking book assures families that with a bit of planning and consistency children can benefit from living with more than one language.

Raising Multilingual Children - Foreign Language Acquisition and Children.
T. Tokuhama-Espinosa (2001)
Bergin & Garvey. ISBN No: 0-89789-750.
The book can be ordered from Bergin & Garvey, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881, USA or Eurospan, 3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8LU, UK.

For more details see Tracey's website: www.multi-faceta.com

HUMOUR, HUMOUR, HUMOUR...

Being a bilingual/bicultural (German/English) family in Park Slope, Brooklyn (New York City), we often talk about how things are done in the U.S. versus Germany or what a word is called in German or English.
This summer I have been teaching Emily how to knit and explained to her that people use different knitting techniques in different countries. When I told her that her Dad also learned how to knit (as a young man when working as a counsellor near Basel, Switzerland), Emily was somewhat shocked and impressed, since she thought that only girls and women knew how to do these handicrafts. She looked at my husband and said: 'Dad, do you knit in German or in English?'

Gabriele Dehn-Knight, New York

HOPE FOR WORKING MOTHERS

Cornelia Aubert

The letter from the Norwegian mother Karina, (BFN Vol. 18: 2, 2001) sounded so familiar to me that I could almost have written it myself three years ago when our daughter Ophélia was two years old. My initial conviction that raising Ophélia bilingually in French and German would be a smooth procedure was quickly followed by unexpected doubts and setbacks. When Ophélia was about three years old, however, the situation took a very positive turn. Today I feel relaxed and confident about the future as I have learned that there are always things that can be done to improve situations.

My husband is French, I am German and we live in France. From the day Ophélia was born we have always used the *one person, one language* method, while my husband and I speak French to each other. Since we both work full time, for the first three years Ophélia had an Algerian nanny who spoke French to her. The nanny's French was not flawless (she was a Kabyle speaker) which did worry me in the beginning, but she had so many other outstanding qualities. We have always felt we were extremely lucky to have found her.

During these years, Ophélia's exposure to German was limited to my daily, but short, presence and to about three annual visits to my German family, who don't speak any French. I exclusively spoke German to Ophélia and used only German books, German music tapes, etc. This ment that she understood German perfectly well but did not speak it spontaneously. French was clearly the dominant language. Only if I insisted 'please speak German to mummy', she would do it. I remember one visit to Germany when Ophélia was two years old and already quite a chatterbox. My mother was happy to see her grandchild and said something in German to Ophélia who, as usual, answered happily in French. My mother said she was sorry but she did not understand a word of what my daughter was telling her. It was a shock to me, since one of the many reasons to bring her up bilingually was to keep up our strong family ties.

At that time I was not totally aware that there was a big difference between fully understanding a language and being able to communicate naturally and spontaneously in that language. After all, I had put so much effort into talking German to my daughter and I did so even when we were surrounded by French people not familiar with German. I knew that if I started making exceptions there would always be a good reason to make more and more exceptions and we would end up with very little German. Of course I realized not everyone understood, nor appreciated, that I did insist speaking German to Ophélia in every situation but I translated whenever necessary. I felt I could not please everybody no matter how hard I tried. Some of my French friends said they wondered how she managed to understand that (strange) language. What a funny remark – of course my daughter understands my mother tongue. I wondered how she could understand French when at her age I had never heard such a thing as a foreign language.

The big change happened when Ophélia was three years old. She started a French kindergarten full-time and, twice a week, attended the German section of the International School in Saint-German-en-Laye (near Paris). Not only did she hear and speak German there six hours a week, but she also became aware that she was just like so many other bilingual children from mixed families. At the same time we started having German au-pairs who spoke German to Ophélia. She learned to sing the songs of my childhood and we watched German videotapes.

From age three onwards we left Ophélia with my family in Germany for a few weeks during the summer holidays. Ophélia has always been so close to one

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BILINGUALISM ... *from page two*

number of different answers. Some may be quite unusual and original. A diverge may give 10, 15, 20 or more answers to such questions. Apart from the expected answers, such as to build a wall and to build a house, the diverge may give some unusual answers: for propping up a wobbly table, as an ashtray, for a use as a footwipe, an abstract sculpture, as a plumb line, for breaking a window when there is a fire, for making a bird bath, to raise a car when mending a puncture.

Researchers tend to find a link between creative thinking and bilingualism. It seems that the ownership of two or more languages may increase fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration in thinking, at least when these are measured by psychological tests. Possibly because of their processing of two languages, bilinguals may have a slightly higher probability of fruitful divergent thinking. How does this occur? Bilinguals will have two or more words for a single object or an idea. They will have two or more ways of referring to the same content area, concept or information. The central notion is that having two or more words for the same object or idea allows bilinguals more freedom and richness in their thinking.

Research on bilingualism and divergent or creative thinking has occurred in a truly international arena: Canada, Ireland, Mexico, Singapore and the United States, for example. Most research findings show that bilinguals are superior to monolinguals in their creative or divergent thinking. Such superiority is found particularly among bilinguals whose two languages are both reasonably well developed. Where there is proficiency to a reasonable level in both languages (so-called balanced bilingualism), fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration in thinking appear to have a higher probability of occurring.

* The drawing is from *A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism* by Colin Baker

I would like to teach German to my daughter during the school hours

We are a German/Danish family living in England. Our children are now 4, 3 and 1 years old.

Is it possible to teach our children to become fluent in both speaking and reading, as well as writing in all three languages?

Our oldest daughter, Jael, started full-time school in September, which here in England is from 9 a.m. until 3.30 p.m. From an early age she was very interested in letters, so I taught her reading and writing German for the past six months, before she started school. She loves learning and picks things up very quickly. I had asked the school to make it possible for me to continue teaching her German (and possibly Danish) during school hours. But I have got the impression that the head-teacher doesn't understand what I am talking about. She seems to think that I am worried about Jael's English and her coping at school ... so she decided against my application, saying Jael would miss out on too much.

Well, my impression is that Jael (who by now is fluent in English) is far ahead of the rest of the class. The other day she came home counting to 100 in English! The teacher said that they hadn't reached 10 yet. And we don't speak English at home at all. And because she reads German and has learned to decode words, she doesn't learn her first English words through the 'look and say' method. She reads them properly. Her class hasn't even started the alphabet yet.

I don't have a problem with her being at school. But I feel that we haven't got enough time left to do German and start Danish. We don't plan to stay in England for the rest of our lives and most probably our children will have to continue schooling in either German or Danish at some point. So, I am wondering whether to write to the head-teacher, to try and explain the importance of the other two languages in Jael's life. Does anybody have experience with dealing with 'monolingual authorities'? Are there any good arguments? Is there an official body/organisation that I could ask for help?

At the moment, I don't want to teach Jael after she comes home from school. But often she asks me whether she can continue with her German lessons, sometimes we do a little work even before we have breakfast.

Well, I hope this doesn't just sound like a typical 'proud mum'!!! I just think that Jael has got the potential to learn more. And I would hate to see that potential wasted, just because a monolingual head-teacher cannot comprehend multilingualism.

Judith Sørensen, England

Our experience was similar, but not identical since our children were speaking French at home and English with their playmates and at school. In this case there is a third language involved. Nonetheless our experience might be helpful.

In order to obtain permission for our children to spend one afternoon per week at home, we wrote first to the Chief Education Officer and then I had a discussion with the Inspector/Adviser for languages for the LEA. I pointed out that the academic research shows that bilingual children, other things being equal, can develop more quickly and have a greater understanding of language than monolinguals, and that we wanted to develop this as far as possible.

However I also pointed out that children do not learn to read and write automatically even if they learn to speak, and that they need help.

Thirdly I pointed out that it is not just a question of language. We wanted our children to have some sense of their French, as well as their English, identity; that we wanted them to learn something about France, its geography and history - and that their mother would use books bought in France and of an appropriate level so she could do with them some of the things they would have done in an English school.

All this was fairly easy because I could use my academic knowledge of the literature and because the Inspector was an understanding and helpful person, who was then able to assure the head-teacher (who again was not a difficult man) that all this was in the interest of the children, their language learning, their learning to read and write and their relationship with their French identity and the French half of their family.

The children therefore spent one afternoon per week at home until they left primary school. They learnt to read and write, but never to the same degree as in English simply because they did so much of their work in the English educational system. Even now (at age 27 and 26) they are stronger in their English than their French literacy, but if they found themselves in a situation where they had an opportunity to develop their written French I am sure they would do so very quickly.

I don't know if Judith can follow the same strategies – and I am not sure what to say about learning three language systems at once – I will leave this to those with more wisdom and experience than me – but I hope that she can find a sympathetic listener nearer the top of the LEA who can reassure the head-teacher.

Michael Byram

Michael Byram is a Professor of Education at the University of Durham. He has written many books on teaching of foreign languages and cultures (see www.multilingual-matters.com)

READING MATTERS

"Reading can be encouraged before a child can read a single letter. As parents read to the very young child, they can gently hold a child's finger and show the movement of the words across the page from left to right (or right to left in some languages), in a rhythmical sequence. As favourite books are read night after night, a child will begin to recognise certain words and begin to associate meaning and word form. How many parents have laughed aloud when a young child picks up a book and pretends to read, having memorised some of the words on the page? The child is learning to love books, to love stories and to associate the printed word with competence and pleasure"

From **A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism** by Colin Baker
Pbk 1-85359-455-5, £9.95 (US$15.95)

"Every language is priceless in that it expresses a unique knowledge and understanding of the world, an infinitely complex sytem of human thought, with information and concepts unique to it"

From 'Language Loss in Alaska, The United States, and the World' by M. Krauss (Frame of Reference Vol.VI:1)

ENGLISH WOMAN... *from page four*

up on the excellent comedy programmes, mostly from the BBC, that were screened in my absence – so three cheers for repeats. But what on earth happened to football? It has taken me three years to grasp what happened to the old Divisions.

British cinema is definitely looking up – with more comfortable seating arrangements as well as a good choice of excellent British films. And there are literally dozens of new magazines on sale at newsagents – only a handful reached the newsagents in Luxembourg, but then how many Luxemburgish publications are on sale here?

Another big shock was the political apathy. I was only able to vote once while living in Luxembourg – in the European elections – and only then because Luxembourg was one of the first countries to ratify the EU agreement on 'foreigners' being entitled to vote. I believe it is our duty to vote, and as a woman I feel being able to vote is a privilege. After all, in the UK, women finally won the right to vote after a long struggle in 1928. And, oh yes, I almost forgot, it is compulsory to vote in most of the other EU countries.

I have been really shocked by the rise in racism all over Europe but especially here. The truth is that the UK has been a 'nation of mongrels' since 600 BC, when the last remaining indigenous inhabitant of the British Isles was chased away by conquering tribes. Even our red and white flag is French! I thought my name was of Irish origin until someone corrected me – the Condons are Celts from Spain. But where did the Celts come from? Can any of us say with conviction what our origins were? We are multicultural and many people are multilingual. Refugees came here from Pakistan and Bangladesh. Living here has opened my eyes to the limitations of the European languages I speak. To get on well in this part of the world I need languages such as Urdu and Gujerati. Arabic would be useful too. I think it is a pity that road signs here are in English only. In Luxembourg most signs are in Luxemburgish, German, French, English and Portuguese, reflecting the richness of the cultural mix found there.

Our local council uses the excuse that it would cost too much to have the signs made up...

Another shock for me was the decline of social standards in England. Just look at the dreadful state of the hospitals, of the roads, of the railways, not to mention the rail tracks. Where did all those blue overall-clad railway workmen go and those amazing crisp white uniforms that nurses used to wear? What happened to British Rail, British Gas and the GPO? Look at the rising crime rate, vandalism, and violence. We are blinded with modern technology, so how do we justify the dreadful poverty and squalor that still exists in some areas of our beautiful country? For it is beautiful – in spite of all the problems with BSE, Foot and Mouth Disease and the return of 19th century diseases, the countryside of the United Kingdom is amongst the most breath-taking in the world.

My time at university has been fantastic but sad to say grants have now been withdrawn. As far as I can see, the average person no longer stands a chance of a university education, unless he or she is able to study and work part-time.

In spite of all the shocks, my experience of 'coming home' has been positive. I have done all sorts of interesting things besides studying. Last summer I helped to set up and run a drop-in centre for the asylum seekers. It's not their fault they were allowed in, nor mine, but just because I don't approve doesn't mean I cannot volunteer as an unpaid helper to assist those who don't speak English, and who arrive here with nothing, over their first few weeks in a new country. After all, I know what it is like to be a stranger in a foreign land.

Deirdre L. Condon

BRINGING STUART... *from page two*

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* The Barrie Press, 13500 Layhill Rd., Silver Springs, MD 20906, USA.

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HELP, HELP, HELP!!!

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to the **Bilingual Family Newsletter** over the years. I have appreciated every letter, even if there has not always been space to publish them all. However, the flow of material is beginning to dry up and I am now in desperate need of interesting material for the year 2002. Subscriber numbers are still going up – but without articles, letters, questions and anecdotes there will be no Newsletter. So please put your writing hat on and start. I welcome any material which might be of interest to people living intercultural lives. The maximum length for an article is around 2000 words but small, interesting items are always welcome as 'fillers'. Here are few suggestions:

- culture shock
- misunderstandings in mixed marriages
- two religions in the family
- teenage/adults view of bilingual/cultural upbringing
- studying, working, living abroad
- cultural differences in manners
- our own or our 'adopted' nation's national characteristics (humorous style)
- festive celebrations in bicultural families
- problems and rewards of raising children multilingually/culturally
- grandparents experiences
- new research
- interviews of interesting bi- or multilingual/ cultural people
- book reviews/conference reports

Thank you in advance for your help. Remember the Newsletter is for you, but above all, *by you*!

Marjukka Grover
Editor

This is an adapted Spanish Language version of the most popular *A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism*
Pbk 1-85359-511-x, June 2001, 248pp
Price £12.95/ US$19.95
Available from Multilingual Matters.

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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.

Contact details removed

HOPE FOR WORKING MOTHERS... *from page five*

of my sisters that I might have been jealous had it not been my own sister! Today Ophélia (5½ years) feels so at home in Germany that she even goes there by plane on her own during her winter or spring holidays. Both Ophélia's French and German are age-appropriate and spontaneous now, she knows very well who speaks which language and totally adapts to it. In Germany people often take her for my sister's daughter without thinking that she speaks anything else but German.

Funnily, when she comes home after her stays in Germany, she even speaks German to her father for a while. Sometimes at dinner table she says 'Daddy has a funny accent when he speaks German' (well, yes, I guess it does sound a little French) and suggests 'Mummy, you should speak German to daddy, otherwise he will never learn it properly' or 'I do not want to hear a single French word anymore now, let's stick to German tonight'. To me that sounds hilarious considering how heavily I used to insist on her speaking German when she was younger.

Ophélia seems happy and confident with her languages. She often says 'Please mummy teach me English now, my German is good enough'. Luckily she never took offence at me not being very relaxed during the first years. As much as I do love foreign languages and different cultures, I am very grateful to her for giving me the opportunity and pleasure to practice my mother tongue again on a daily basis.

It takes time, patience, practice and goodwill to raise a child bilingually but it is possible, even for a full-time working mother, and it is very rewarding and worth it.

Contact details removed