

The Bilingual Family Newsletter



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News and Views for Intercultural People

Editor: Marjukka Grover Assistant Editor: Sami Grover 2002, Vol 19 No.3

EDITORIAL

I have spent first part of the year in Finland nursing my mother who was ill with cancer. She died in a beautiful May morning at the age of 82, just the way she had always wanted; in her own bed surrounded by the family. My warmest thanks for all the good wishes I received during those difficult months.

Despite being an emotionally sad time I experienced a real revival of my cultural roots. Although I visit Finland regularly, it is a long time since I have seen the cold, dark winter days gradually became lighter, snow melting, ice disappearing from the lake and flowers bursting open, filling the air with fantastic scent. The time there renewed my love of Finland and Finnish culture, yet I also felt real joy at returning home to England.

In this issue's leading article Michael Allan explains how through different – often painful – adjustment periods we can achieve balanced multicultural identities. I had almost forgotten how strong “culture shock” I had after my honeymoon period with England was over and I realised that this strange country would be mine for the rest of my life (if I stayed married to my lovely English man). For years I criticised everything English and glorified my own beloved Finland. However, gradually I came to enjoy the gentle polite way English people speak, easy socialisation, lovely old towns, lush country side, mild climate. Now, after 30 years of living in this beautiful (if too crowded) island, I sometime find it hard to separate my two cultures and countries.

To achieve that balanced identity it is important to love and nurture our own language and culture but at the same time accept, respect and value the “foreign” culture in our lives.

Marjukka Grover

A CULTURAL NO-MAN'S LAND?

Michael Allan



“Culture refers to widely shared ideals, values, formation and use of categories, assumptions about life and goal-directed activities that become consciously or sub-consciously accepted as ‘right’ and ‘correct’ by people who identify themselves as members of a society”. (Brislin, 1990: p.11)

The global communications revolution may mean that words, pictures and information can travel around the world in forty milliseconds, but meanings, values and inter-personal communication sometimes seem as remote to the global traveler as they ever were in the time of Jules Verne. Those to whom globalization has meant relocation to another culture or a nomadic existence, may also worry about the effect of growing up in many cultures on their children's cultural identity, as families the world over do about the effects of global mass media, and express the fear of their remaining in a cultural no-man's land.

But what is culture? This question directed to most people would meet with a response that it is art, music, literature, perhaps generally of a high-brow nature. ‘Popular culture’ might be seen to include pop music, fashion, TV and mass media. Qualify it with the word ‘national’ and

specific descriptions of food and dress, but also habits and characteristics, might emerge, perhaps with the emphasis on differences, but certainly with generalisations about the whole population:- French men are charming, Italians eat spaghetti, Chinese inscrutable etc. Reflections on why these differences occur might refer to ideas like history, social structure, traditions and religion.

Most formal definitions of culture, like that of Brislin above, recognize these different levels of meaning, but also others that we take for granted in our own lives, and perhaps fail to perceive that they may be different in other societies. One reason for this is that although some differences in culture are easily visible, others are hidden from the traveler. What is considered to be natural behavior in one culture may not be in another. One well-known model that illustrates this is the ‘iceberg’ model (Fennes and Hapgood, 1997), which is shown in a simplified version in Figure 1.

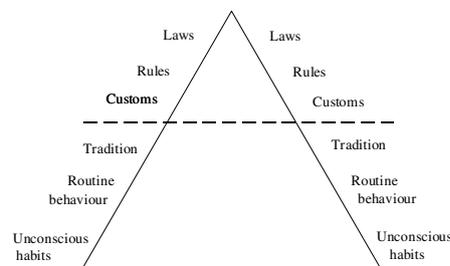


Figure 1: A refined iceberg of culture (Fennes & Hapgood, 1997: p.17)

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Cultural No-Mans...from page 1

Above the surface are the laws and rules, which are consciously formulated and thus 'unnatural' but easily visible. Below the surface are the invisible parts of culture, cultural rules of routine behavior and unconscious habits, which are considered to be 'natural', and which are instinctively known and followed by everyone in that culture. In between come customs and traditions that seem to be natural, but have also been formed by society and constitute hidden cultural differences. The line between them varies among cultures, some aspects will be visible in some cultures, but not in others.

Upon moving to another society, especially for the first time, people start to experience it differently than they may have done on holidays or short trips. This causes cultural dissonance, or a disharmony in communication, behavior, expectations and experience due to the differences in these hidden cultural characteristics; rather like two musicians who think they are playing the same tune, but are in fact in different keys and out of time with each other. Difference in

"...confrontation[...] is the key element for anyone who hopes to achieve understanding and acceptance of other cultures..."

language alone can be a significant source of anxiety, as language is closely linked to identity. In addition to this there will be a different set of non-verbal codes, or cultural codes (Hoopes, 1979), associated not only with motions, gestures, body language and manner, but also hidden cultural variables like gender relationships, family structures, behaviour patterns and thought processes. Many such features of the new culture are difficult to recognize. Because the members of the other culture consider these things to be natural, they may not even be able to explain them, leaving the migrant confused and unsure. First recognition of this fact is generally described as culture shock.

Cultural dissonance can result in culture shock when people are removed from their own culture groups that define who they are in terms of their roles and dimensions, their self, and where this self-concept is continually supported and reinforced. It can be experienced when we realize that what we consider to be 'normal' is not thought appropriate or is rejected by the other culture.

It is in everyday social interactions in their own society, that people gain their ideas of identity and self-esteem, a concept understood as 'face'. *'Face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact'* (Goffman, 1967: p.5). In inter-cultural interactions, the word 'assume' has a particular significance. We learn to interpret the actions of others, relate them to ourselves and react accordingly, within our own cultures. When confronted with behavior of people from other cultures, our 'classification system' gives rise to dissonance or misleading interpretations. Assuming wrongly, in interpreting the behavior of others and their reaction to our behavior, leads to disorientation and loss of 'face', and we begin to lose our self-esteem and sense of identity.

This factor in culture shock arises from our use of categories to interpret our experience. Although we may be expert in our own societies, ambiguity produced by the lack of fit of experiences with people in other cultures may lead us to categorize wrongly. We may have only a superficial understanding of the culture. This leads to stereotyping, classifying people upon superficial differences. This contrasts with successful categorization, where someone will make the same judgment about behavior as an individual in the other culture. Clearly, movement from the former to the latter is a sign of intercultural learning.

Problems occur if we confuse our stereotypes with reality, giving those categories negative characteristics, because they represent the unknown. However, arguments against stereotyping, that we should emphasize our similarities rather than our differences, simply perpetuate cross-cultural communication difficulties. The cultural dissonance arising from differences is the medium and the essence of intercultural learning. Where there is no cultural dissonance there will be no change in the cultural norms of the actors and no intercultural learning will take place. Superficial interaction produces superficial outcomes. It is confrontation with the strange on more than a superficial level that makes a person question both their own and other values, and this is the key element for anyone who hopes to achieve understanding and acceptance of other cultures. The process is not painless.

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Thanks Oma!

Charlotte Evans



I was born in Canada in 1982. I have been able to communicate in three languages for as long I can remember. Speaking German, French and English is a big part of who I am and I believe that family support as well as my own interest has helped me understand the problems, confusions and the advantages of growing up with three languages.

My father is British and my mother German. My first language is English but I cannot ignore the fact that from a very early age, German was integrated in my life. My German grandparents have always encouraged their children and grandchildren to learn the language of their ancestors. I was read to, sung to, scolded etc. in German and although I did not understand much, I believe it was their daily insistence that gave me a good grounding in the language. For instance, my grandparents regulated our time spent in front of the television. To be allowed to watch one hour of English TV we had to read a German book, no matter the level, for half an hour. We, of course, hated this ritual because we were only interested in the A-team, beauty pageants and other shows. Thankfully, they stayed strong and with support and pressure I was on my way to becoming bilingual. My grandmother was especially active in enforcing our German comprehension. She would tell exciting and shocking war stories to her spellbound grandchildren and we could not help but be interested. Soon, the language barrier was not a problem.

I believe each grandchild, a total of 18, has been shown our family tree. Our German heritage can be traced back to the times of feudal lords and even to alliances with Richard the Lionheart. The list is extensive and the names are horrendous but the history is there and to me, these facts only became interesting when I moved to Germany. To be allowed to see with my own eyes, where my grandmother grew up, where her father would entertain guests or where the servants were housed was fascinating. The extravaganzas were enormous.

Unfortunately, it took a bit of imagination to picture the mansion in its splendour as it was abandoned and forgotten after World War II. Still, to a young girl, who loved her grandmother's German stories, the proof was there and my German ancestors became real human beings as opposed to fairytales. My grandparents were, and still are, largely responsible for my mounting interest in the German language and tradition.

French was introduced to my life in grade one. I attended numerous French programs for a total of eight years with interruptions. These interruptions were due to two lengthy stays in Germany. My third language has never had the same personal affects on me as German has. This may have to do with my family roots, but it is more related to the fact that learning an additional language in school has never really pressured or stimulated me. Verb charts, grammar rules etc. are uninteresting when you know that your next class is English and that the only reason for this boring repetition is for the examinations and not for everyday use.

“Not only could I speak three languages, but had experiences living and travelling abroad [...] the opportunities seemed and still seem endless.”

Personally, I prefer being in the country to learn the language first hand. I guess this is because once there, I am forced to adapt and learn. However, as this was out of my control at the time, I tried my best with what I was given. I studied hard in class and on my own time read French books like *‘Le petit Prince’* etc. This time it was my mother who supported and pressured me. She is a professor of translation and therefore was always willing to correct, edit and criticise my works. She has always thought that language skills are important and especially in Canada, speaking the two national languages is an asset for any job.

There were, of course, negative experiences while juggling languages and cultures. Change was a reoccurring theme in my childhood. I moved from Germany to Canada several times. Each time I was torn away from my, by that point, somewhat stable life and was thrown into a completely different environment. I was forced to adapt to strange school systems, new fashion ‘rules’, cultural changes and most importantly for a teenage girl, new social circles.

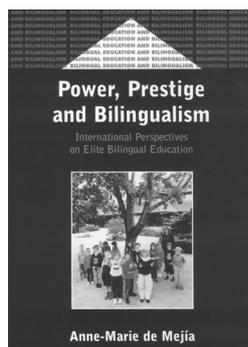
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READING MATTERS

Power, Prestige & Bilingualism: International Perspectives on Elite Bilingual Education Anne-Marie de Mejía

Review by Colin Baker

Many readers come from prestigious or elite bilingual families and may be interested in this pioneering new book by Dr. Anne-Marie de Mejía, a member of the Editorial Board of the *BFN*.



The words ‘prestigious’ or ‘elite’ do not refer to social or financial circumstances, but rather to family or regional contexts where two or more majority languages are used. For example, where a family speaks German and English, or Mandarin and Japanese, the children are typically offered the opportunity to acquire two high status languages, much to their advantage.

Among prestigious bilingual families are those who regularly travel or work abroad. There are increasing numbers employed by large international companies, envoys and diplomats, and administrators in United Nations and pan-European organisations.

There is typically no debate about children becoming bilingual in elite bilingual families. The advantages of two languages are all too obvious: communication, economic, cultural, thinking and education advantages. Bilingualism and biculturalism, and not just bilingualism are the typical outcomes.

Anne-Marie de Mejía’s book is the very first to portray and discuss such elite situations. Families, societies, regions and forms of schooling where prestigious bilingualism is available are all expertly tackled. Given the effects of globalisation, the incremental ease of communication across the world, rapid travel and increasing inter-cultural marriages, this highly original, well-informed and internationally researched book is to be welcomed.

The author discusses how marriage and business provided the settings for elite bilingual families, and engages the cultural aspects of such settings, not just the linguistic issues. Her consideration of elite bilingual education in International Schools, European schools, immersion education (and other forms of bilingual education) is particularly thoughtful. There is a careful consideration of parent–teacher relationships and not just of classroom practicalities.

The second part of the book examines elite bilingual provision in different countries across the world: United States, Finland, Spain, Australia, Canada, Morocco, Tanzania, Argentina, Colombia, Japan, Hong Kong, Brunei Darussalam and elsewhere. A particularly helpful chapter looks at common problems in elite bilingualism, engaging such topics as child language proficiency, the development of biliteracy, becoming bicultural, childhood and adolescent development, and not least parental involvement in schools.

Such is the novelty and originality of this book, every reader, whether from elite bilingual families or not, will gain much from its contents. Written in a precise and very readable style, there is an eminently sensible, astute and balanced approach from someone with considerable expertise.

Few books can claim to be the first in a particular line of study. This one justifiably can, and deserves wide readership.

Power, Prestige and Bilingualism: International Perspectives on Elite Bilingual Education by Anne-Marie, Multilingual Matters, 2002.

Pbk ISBN: 1-85359-590-X
£24.95/ US\$39.95/ CAN\$49.95

HUMOUR, HUMOUR, HUMOUR...

Language Death -A New Definition?

From an unknown source on the internet

A - *The Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.*

B - *On the other hand, the French eat a lot of fat and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.*

C - *The Japanese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.*

D - *The Italians drink excessive amounts of red wine and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.*

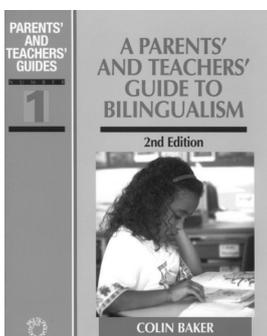
E - *Conclusion: Eat and drink what you like. It’s speaking English that kills you.*

Thanks Oma...from page 3

I have changed schools nine times. The hardest thing for me was dealing with the alienation. However, I found that having to adjust as a foreigner has its pros and cons. Having to start afresh every couple of years put a great deal of stress on me and feeling accepted and 'approved' was crucial to me to be able to feel comfortable. And that can take months, if not longer. Being the 'New Girl' is tough. Yet the outcome is that these, at times unpleasant, changes and necessary adaptations have made me a very flexible, open-minded, and confident person. I realized that compared to many, I had had a childhood with a lot of advantages. Not only could I speak three languages, but had experiences of living and travelling abroad. I had a European passport and the opportunities seemed and still seem endless. I believe that the advantages of multilingual communication by far outweigh the initial stress and discomfort.

Today, I appreciate the chance my family has given me even more. Thanks to the people I met and the language skills I learnt early on, I am a keen and ambitious traveller. At the moment I am in France polishing my French and last year I spent several months in Mexico and Spain learning Spanish. I have so much fun communicating in several languages and I often find myself in company where I am the translator for others. Communication is an everyday occurrence which is taken for granted but having the ability to fluently express myself in three - almost four - languages is a skill that I cherish and put to use at all possible occasions.

Thanks Oma!



"Professor Colin Baker writes as a concerned parent as well as an academic and educationalist ... The book is accessible to general readers and avoids academic terminology"

J. Gundara, *Times Educational Supplement*.

Pbk 1-85359-455-5, price £9.95 /US\$15.95

BILINGUAL SCHOOLS IN ARGENTINA

Laura Renart



Argentina is a country of immigrants and now, a hundred years after the main European influx arrived in these shores, it is a monolingual country. 'Bilingualism' is restricted to the educational system and mostly refers to Spanish-English duality. The term 'bilingual education' in Argentina is widely used and labels 'all schools where there is Spanish and English tuition'.

To the parents' eye, that is what matters: to speak two languages, but not any language. It's got to be English, no matter what. The kind of school parents are so eager to choose comes from the first part of the 19th century, when Argentina was experiencing a stream of immigration. These 'English' schools were a consequence of the establishment of those immigrants who wanted to keep their customs and religion in spite of their uprooting. Freedom of creed was guaranteed in this country in those days, unlike some other parts of the world. These schools carried with them a British cultural background with Puritan principles. Consequently, the English language was jealously defended and Spanish was not considered relevant. British immigrants did not mix with the native people or people from other currents.

The first Scottish settlers arrived in 1825 and the first 'Scotch National School' was founded in 1838. These schools proliferated between 1860 and 1923 but not until 1938 were they requested to abide by the Ministry of Education guidelines to ensure 'equal education for every child'. Education was exclusively English with sports (rugby for boys and hockey for girls), 'houses'¹ named after British admirals, prefects, head pupils, hymns, and even the Queen's birthday, a celebration which was only interrupted in 1982 with the Malvinas (Falklands) war.

The settlers never knew that schools founded to link their children to the religion and country they had left would become symbols of wealth and status. A system that was regarded as progressive by educators some decades ago due to its focus on collaborative learning and group work, had become highly elitist. This is what most new private schools are trying to imitate: the inclusion of English education to ensure excellence. These

schools are extremely expensive (up to US\$ 1200 for each kid at primary school level)² and consequently leave out a great portion of the population.

In private bilingual schools, tuition is given both in English and Spanish every day. Regarding the depth of the syllabi, they are a total bilingual-biliterate programme which implies the integral training in all language skills, both in the first and second language.

What kind of children attend these schools? These children speak English only at school, do not belong to multilingual families or spend a long time in English-speaking countries (except, perhaps, for occasional holidays in Disney World). They speak Spanish at home and identify English as the language of 'authority and knowledge'. They can be said to follow 'one parent, one language' theory in the sense that they identify

"A system that was regarded as progressive by educators some decades ago due to its focus on collaborative learning and group work, had become highly elitist."

languages with teachers: Spanish in the morning, English in the afternoon, generally. They internalize this difference so well that if they see their teachers outside class, they say 'hello' to them in the corresponding language. This attitude changes as they grow older and become more aware of the existence of two separate languages. According to the definition established by Hamers and Blanc, 1989, children in these schools can be considered 'consecutive bilinguals' (they all learnt Spanish as their mother tongue and started tuition in English at the age of kindergarten); they attend an 'English' school for its added social value.

Not until 2001 did the government of the city of Buenos Aires manage to set up pilot bilingual programmes in state schools, restricted to first form in 12 primary schools, where children belong to a much less privileged social group 'in order to guarantee equal opportunities and challenges'³. The proportion was as follows: 6 English-Spanish schools, 2 French-Spanish, 2 Italian-Spanish and 2 Portuguese-Spanish. The foreign language is taught through content-based programmes during eight hours a week, which of course is much less than the exposure children receive in private schools. In these schools the foreign language is taught daily for two hours, with

a different teacher for each language. Teachers spend the fifth day of the week monitoring the pedagogic model, unheard of in the state system.

As an example of the additive value of English in this country and as proof of parents' pressure – and proof that the project's first year was successful in its – the year 2002 will welcome 5 more English-Spanish schools and 1 French-Spanish; Portuguese (our neighbour language) and Italian will keep the existing number of schools. It is the policy of the Ministry of Education to include other languages apart from English and French, as this is a project backed by different embassies. It is not designed exclusively on the parents' choice; some parents do not regard Italian or Portuguese as worth learning because they 'look easy' due to similar structures and a degree of transparency.⁴ The Secretary of Education emphasizes the idea that it is 'essential to create an 'educational environment' in the foreign language, in which the language is integrated with music, arts and games. On the other hand, the educational authorities understand that the teaching of another language reinforces the learning of the mother tongue. With this objective, curriculum design strategies in which the articulation of the teaching of both languages is taken into account were implemented'.⁵

The number of state bilingual schools is limited so far because they are more expensive: two teachers to be paid, one of them qualified in the teaching of the language that is being offered. Besides, the subject of bilingualism and the importance of learning through two simultaneous languages from early childhood has had to endure some resistance in the last decades on the grounds of what was considered its negative effects and strong positions regarding the importance of including a second language once the mother tongue had been acquired. We can't deny the fact that the children who attend these state bilingual schools enjoy more benefits than the kids who attend other state schools: more time at school mainly.

Spanish-English bilingualism has its own characteristics in the Argentinian context: bilingualism is not equally divided between the haves and the have-nots. It is far from being an equal opportunity for every pupil in the school system but there is a common denominator in the philosophy behind it: to provide children with an extra tool to fight in this extremely unequal world.

Laura Renart

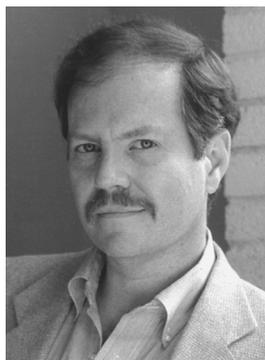
T.S. Eliot Bilingual Studies - ISP "Dr. Sáenz"
- Universidad Virtual de Quilmes -Universidad Argentina de la Empresa
Buenos Aires, Argentina

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NEWS FROM THE USA

Good, Bad and Ugly

James Crawford



A new study offers both good news and bad news about bilingual adolescents in the US. The good news is that second-generation immigrants who maintain strong native-language skills rate higher on measures of social adjustment than their monolingual English speaking counterparts. The bad news is that by the time these students reach high school, few of them remain fluent bilinguals.

These are the latest findings of the Children of English Longitudinal Study, a decade-long research project involving more than 5,000 students of 77 nationalities in South Florida and Southern California.

The sociologists Alejandro Portes and Lingxin Hao (2002) examined the experience of linguistic assimilation among these second-generation immigrant youth (defined as those with at least one foreign-born parent and at least five years' residence in the United States). They identified four alternative outcomes:

English monolinguals, who acquired proficiency in English while losing their heritage language;
fluent bilinguals, who acquired proficiency in English and at least one other language;
foreign monolinguals, who acquired proficiency in their native language but not English; and
limited bilinguals, who never acquired full proficiency in either language.

Based on surveys conducted when the students were age 17 on average, the researchers compared the four 'linguistic adaptation types' on the basis of various measures of social adjustment. These included self-esteem, educational aspirations for college and beyond, and family solidarity vs. family conflict. Background variables such as socioeconomic status, intact families, length of residence in the United States, and early school grades were controlled.

The results were instructive. Fluent bilinguals scored significantly higher on all three measures than English monolinguals. Foreign monolinguals, who remained attached to their parents'

language and culture, also reported high levels of family solidarity, but scored low in self-esteem and educational aspirations.

Limited bilinguals scored lowest on all measures. Portes and Hao stressed that 'it is not bilingualism in general, but *fluent* bilingualism that is associated with positive adaptation outcomes' (emphasis in original).

Unfortunately, maintaining fluency in the heritage language is an increasing challenge for second-generation youth – even in South Florida, where bilingualism is widespread and has social high status. Overall, the study found that only 27% of the children of immigrants were fluent bilinguals.

These patterns differed substantially by nationality group, with Asian immigrants generally more likely to become English monolinguals than Hispanic immigrants. The preference for English, however, was remarkably strong – 72 percent across all nationalities – and a minority phenomenon only among Mexicans.

Such findings should be comforting to Americans who fear that today's immigrants are resisting English. They are less comforting to anyone concerned about immigrants' long-term success in the United States. Nevertheless, the policy pendulum is swinging hard toward English-only mandates in the schools. Portes and Hao conclude:

"While popular with the public at large, educational policies that promote complete linguistic assimilation contain hidden costs for these children, depriving them of a key social resource at a critical juncture in their lives. Family relations and personality development suffer accordingly. ... Cut these moorings and children are cast adrift in a uniform monolingual world. They, their families, and eventually the communities where they settle will have to pay the price".

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Portes, A. and Hao L. (1998) E Pluribus Unum: Bilingualism and language loss in the second generation. *Sociology of Education*, 71, (269-294).

Portes, A. and Hao L. (2002) *The price of uniformity: Language, family, and personality adjustment in the immigrant second generation*. Center for Migration and Development, Princeton University.

At War With Diversity James Crawford

This collection of essays analyses the sources of the anti-bilingual movement in USA, its changing directions, and its impact on education policy.
Pbk 1-85359-505-5, 2000, 143pp
Price£9.95 / US\$15.95



Choice of Schools for Bilingual Children

I am French, my husband is English and we bring up our children - Elizabeth 3 1/2 and Luois 4months - bilingually, following the principle of one parent-one language. We tend to use English as a family language but my husband does speak French and he sometimes uses it when addressing me.

Our daughter's progress has been very satisfactory until recently when, as part of her reaction to the birth of her brother, she's started mixing the two languages again - a little bit only, but enough to be a contrast with the past.

It's also time for her to go to school: she's gone through several assessments in order to get a place in our local private schools, in South London. We are now faced with a decision to make: what is best for her? A selective school which puts a strong emphasis on academia and classical curriculum, or let Elizabeth go to a more laid-back school where her brain may be less stimulated... or pressured?

Can you help us by giving us information about the effect of bilingualism on the process of learning in very young children, and the way the practice of two languages may - or may not - slow down the acquisition of basic intellectual skills? In other words, should we leave Elizabeth more time to absorb her bilingualism or should we just trust her ability to cope with even more stimulation?

Claire Edwards

The effects of bilingualism on children's intelligence are now recognised to be positive. Ellen Bialystok studied French/English children in Canada and concluded that they have a higher level of *meta-cognitive awareness*. This means that they understand that there are two ways of labelling things and that words are not only fixed to one object. This awareness comes much later for monolingual children. Bilingual children are very good at adapting their speech to the person they are talking to, having gained an early awareness of speaking the right language to a parent or carer. Having access to two cultures means that they are often good at story-telling and creative activities.

Your choice of school depends on your future plans. If you plan to live in England long-term a traditional school following a typical English curriculum would be appropriate. You mention some private selective schools in South London. I am sure that Elizabeth will receive a high quality education there. These schools often ask for extensive parental help with homework etc. which would be in English, although this should not be a problem for you. If you plan to return to France, or wish that Elizabeth learns to read and write in French, a more laid-back, less academically-focused school may be better. You would have more time to work on French at home. This is important if the children are to join the French school system at some stage.

"School is a big challenge to any four-year-old and there will be periods when Elizabeth may refuse to speak French..."

In both situations, I recommend talking to Headteachers about how you can support Elizabeth's French. Many are keen to promote language-learning in primary schools. There may be opportunities for you to come into school, read a French story or sing songs to children.

We chose a relatively informal English school for our English/French bilingual children. As we intend to return to France we wanted to work on French. In France, formal schooling starts later so we can establish English reading/writing around age four and introduce French a year or so later, when the basic concepts are understood. One problem I have encountered at school is that Marc, five, is only assessed on his English language skills. However, he is happy at school and proud of his French heritage.

School is a big challenge to any four-year-old. There will be periods when Elizabeth may refuse to speak French or mix a lot at home as a way of dealing with changes in her life. Trust in Elizabeth's ability to cope with bilingualism; as long as she has lots of input and encouragement from her family she will cope well and enjoy having two worlds to explore and think about.

Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert

Suzanne is currently writing a book on the *One-parent-one-language* strategy.

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Well, you are definitely English...

I am German, but lived in the UK for about 6 years and my daughter was born there. I was always determined to lose my German accent.

We moved back to Germany last year. Last month I was on a business trip in Italy with my new boss who had never heard me speak English. We were sitting in a restaurant one evening and on the table beside us sat a couple from England, though I couldn't make out which part.

We were spoke mostly German but sometimes had to speak English to the waiter. Later in the evening, the English woman bent over and said to me 'You know, I know you are definitely English but your husband is not' (meaning my boss)! I was so pleased to hear this, and even more so to hear it in front of my boss, that this actually was the best day of the trip. You can imagine that my boss was nearly speechless (I don't know whether this was about being called my 'husband' or about me 'being English').

So, in the end, I achieved what I had always wanted!

Keep up your good work with the BFN. I can only encourage everybody to bring their children up bilingual.

Gabriele Eiber,
Hof/Bavaria, Germany

Chopsticks as "boundary"...

I read with interest the article 'The Bicultural Child as Boundary' (BFN 19:2, 2002).

We have had to teach our children that if you eat with chopsticks, you lift the bowl up to your mouth. This means you're enjoying your food. However when we eat with a knife and fork, the plate stays firmly on the table!

Another thing we had to teach them is: giving and receiving. You must use both hands, to show respect, in China. Our children also have to realise that if an English person only uses one hand it doesn't mean he's being rude. It just doesn't have the same importance for English people!

Jenny Li
Bournemouth, UK

No-Man's Land?... from Page 2

The first stage in this process of intercultural learning (Figure 2) is **awareness**, an acceptance that part of our self comes from our culture and that we are not entirely unique. There is a natural tendency to resist self-awareness because of the threat to our identities, and to attribute cultural insensitivity to others, not ourselves. However, it is a pre-requisite for **understanding, acceptance and respect** for other cultures, the second and third stages, and finally the **appreciation and valuing** of other cultures which leads to **multiculturalism**, the ability to feel comfortable with people from different cultures while retaining one's own identity.

However, progression is not automatic, there are several 'dead-ends' or intermediate outcomes along the way. Culture shock, loss of face, and stereotyping may lead to:

- Ethnocentrism** - remaining isolated or forming mono-cultural expatriate groups;
- Adaptation** - the development of coping strategies without any fundamental change;
- Assimilation** - absorption into the dominant culture and abandoning of original cultural characteristics.

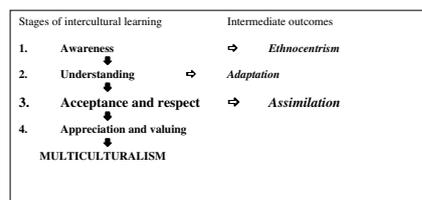


Figure 2: An intercultural learning process

Becoming aware of one's own and other cultures, and understanding of differences, are the first and second steps in cultural learning, but are learned through experience rather than a conscious intellectual process. Cultural awareness involves looking inward, reflection and putting ideas into action. Multiculturalism is not the same as intercultural learning in the sense of the learning *about* other cultures, which is the intellectual appreciation of cultural differences.

It is a development of the personality of the individual, where s/he learns to see and understand different sides of behavior in people of other cultures, and is able to relate them to him/herself and adapt behavior accordingly. This ability becomes a part of their personal development, a widening of their range of social interaction. This leads to multiculturalism in the true sense, of one who has learned the personal interaction skills to be able to communicate on

various levels with people of other cultures, not only ones with which s/he has had concrete experience, but losing the mystification and confusion when confronted with the new or the strange.

This person has thus gained a multicultural identity, the degree and presence of cultural factors from his/her own native culture and those of other cultures with which s/he has come into contact resulting from a personal, to some extent a conscious, process of evaluation and rejection or acceptance of different cultural values.

These border crossings between cultures

“Becoming aware of one's own and other cultures, and understanding of differences, are the first and second steps in cultural learning, but are learned through experience rather than a conscious intellectual process.”

sometimes appear to be a minefield. Some individuals may choose not to cross, remaining isolated or forming expatriate groups from their own culture. Some do cross, from minority to majority culture involving acculturation and possible loss of their own cultural identity. Others, however, may remain in cultural

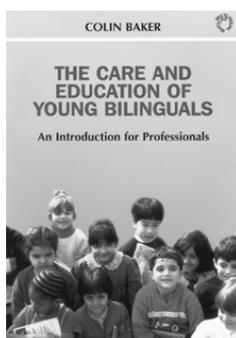
no-man's land, what is sometimes called the Third Culture (Useem and Downie, 1976). However to most people it is not important how the cross-cultural mines got there, what they need is a map, and an understanding of cultural dissonance may help them with the intercultural learning needed to negotiate these borderlands between cultures without surrendering entirely their own cultural identities, thus developing the multicultural personality.

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Michael Allan is an international teacher who has worked in adult, further and secondary education in Europe and South America. He is currently Assistant Principal at an international school in the Netherlands. His Master's research, from which this article was taken, was on cultural dissonance and inter-cultural learning at Oxford Brookes University. He is continuing in this field with PhD studies at the University of Bath.

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HELP, HELP, HELP...

Do you have a teenager in the house?

In connection with a long-term study of bilingual language practices, I would be very interested to hear from any families who have (or ever have had) adolescent children - especially if you have noticed any significant shifts in the pattern of language choices between family members at this time. I can

Contact details removed

References for *Bilingual Schools in Argentina* - from page 5

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http://www.buenosaires.esc.edu.ar/educacion/bilingues/escuelas_bilingues.asp

Endnotes

1. Divisions into which students were streamed for sports competitions and school credits.
2. This article was written before the January 2002 devaluation: now those figures are exactly half of what it used to be.
3. NB: our translation
http://www.buenosaires.esc.edu.ar/educacion/bilingues/escuelas_bilingues.asp
4. This article is written by somebody who struggled with Portuguese verbs and pronunciation for three years and who is far from calling this language "easy" if you want to speak accurately.
5. NB: our translation
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