



# Australian Newsletter For Bilingual Families

November 2003: Volume 0, Issue 0

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## Letter from the Editor

With my departure from academic life and my recent qualification as a speech pathologist I am finally in the position to come true on my promise for a newsletter for bilingual families. I want this newsletter to provide what I had wished for when I was raising my two boys with German and English: Ideas on how to do it, information about resources, contact leads to other families who speak the same language, a centralised place where to find out about activities for children in my language.

This newsletter will publish articles on family strategies for raising children bilingually from babies through to adolescents. It will review resources for parents and explain how to get them. I will ent-

tice companies and institutions to organise activities in languages other than English for children and publish them here.

I invite you to make this newsletter a forum for yourself, where you ask questions, contact other families, or let others know what has worked for you.

This newsletter will be published 5 times a year and I guarantee that all issues for 2004 will come out.

However, the long-term survival of this newsletter will depend on the newsletter financing itself. So please, subscribe and advertise in the newsletter, and let other bi-lingual families know about it. Information about publishing dates, subscriptions and advertising can be found on page 8.

With best wishes for 2004,

*Susanne Döpke*

## Quantity of Input Versus Quality of Input

The degree to which parents are successful in raising their children bilingually varies greatly. Very importantly, it seems to be less due to outside circumstances like the language group families come from, whether they have grandparents who can support them or how affluent the family is, than on how much the child can understand and enjoy when the parent speaks the community language.

Not enough time can be off-set by the quality of interaction between parents and children. This is particularly important for busy parents, who can only spend a few hours a day with their children.

It is true: the more people who speak the same language there are, the more likely it is that some of them will provide the type of input necessary to learn the language. Or everybody will provide a little bit of useful input, which all together amounts to what the child needs to

learn the community language.

**But when you are the only or main person who uses the community language, then the whole burden of providing appropriate input rests on your shoulders.**

However, this does not need to be the end of it. When your children are able to understand what you say and feel understood when they try to talk, they find it rewarding to talk to you and hear you talk. Thus their experience with your language is rewarding, and they will want to speak to you. This will motivate your children to learn your language.

**What can parents do then to provide a rewarding language environment?**

Ask yourself what your child likes to do and do it together. Most children like to play. Play is a fantastic environment for the parent to concentrate on what the child is doing and trying to say. If you put his/her action into the words of your

## Quantity of Input Versus Quality of Input cont.

language, your child will understand you and learn from it! **Just half an hour of play a day - every day or most days! - makes a BIG difference.**

I used to make the first half hour after coming home from work this special play time with my son. With a cup of tea huddled up in his cubby tent I simply kept my eyes on his actions and confirmed what he said by repeating it. For me it was a very relaxing and totally undemanding wind-down time.

Cuddling up with your child and looking at a book is relaxing for the adult as well and provides an excellent environment to learn language for your child. **Every time you repeat the book, your child understands a little more of what you say.**

Initially it is much more im-

portant to talk about the pictures than to read the text. Once your child knows a book, he or she will want to participate and you can gradually build on your child's contributions with longer and more complex utterances.

The lack of varied speakers of your language can - to some degree - be compensated through songs, games, radio plays and children's videos in community languages.

Watch out for more information on reading and playing as well as reviews of language material for children in upcoming Newsletters. Or use this Newsletter to exchange resources and play ideas with other families.

**The Motto of quality:  
HAVE FUN with your  
child!**



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## Articles planned for 2004

- Strategies for overcoming the child's reluctance to speak the home language
- (Re-)Introducing the home language to the older child
- Sign-English bilingualism
- Language development in bilingual children: how does it happen?
- Learning to read in two languages
- Bilingualism and disability
- Facing criticisms
- Learning to read a character-based language
- Schooling options in the home language
- *and more!*

## Bilingualism And Achievement In School

Forty years of research have shown that being bilingual presents no harm to the child, neither during the early development nor at school age. To the contrary, bilingualism may accelerate the child's development in some areas.

Some of these areas impact directly or indirectly on your child's academic development.

Piaget, one of the most famous child psychologists of all times, argued that children move from the pre-operational stage to the concrete operational stage at around 7 years of age. Being able to engage in concrete mental operation was and is seen as an important step in starting to read. The Canadian researchers Bain & Yu (1978) showed that bilingual children tend to make this transition somewhat earlier than do monolingual children.

More recently, bilingual chil-

dren have been found to have advantages in activities which involve the conscious manipulation of language, for example the manipulation of sounds in words, in order to arrive at a new word. To test this, children are asked questions like: "What is the same in 'mop' and 'mat'?" Being able to engage in games like this is seen as an important metalinguistic ability in the development of reading. That this advantage is limited to the initial stages of reading development is congruent with the finding that bilingual children make the transition between the cognitive stages at this age more quickly. It is also indicative of bilingual children bringing metalinguistic abilities to the task of learning to read which monolingual children only develop through it.

How fast children learn to read very much depends on the difficulties posed by the script.

## Bilingualism And Achievement in School cont.

Children learning to read in languages with a very clear correspondence between letters and sounds, eg. Spanish, Italian, German or Persian - to name just a few, tend to learn to read more quickly than children learning to read in English. In the beginning stages of reading, the more regular script helps bilingual children to understand the concept of reading more quickly than they would with English alone.

For children who are deaf research has shown that those who are competent users of sign language and are taught reading in English as a second language develop better literacy skills than near deaf children who have been raised orally only.

Initially there may be some interference from the language easier to read to English, because children transfer the strategies they know. Such transference is normal in all areas of child development: What is easy to learn is learnt first, and what is already known is used to solve more difficult problems. Over time, this strategy will become unnecessary for the child. There will be tips on how to teach your child to read in the home language in the April issue next year and an article on the implications of character-based languages for the development of literacy in Australia in the November issue.

Anything conceptual which a bilingual child learns can be transferred between languages. All the child needs are a few additional words if s/he wants to talk about it in the other language. This includes maths, arts, science - anything. Bilingualism itself has never been found to hinder children's success in these areas. To the contrary: the more developed

both languages are, the greater the advantage. This is possibly due to increased abilities to think creatively and divergently which research has detected among bilingual children.

Watch out for strategies to fill the gaps between home language knowledge and school language development in future issues of this Newsletter.

Teachers' scepticisms towards bilingual children is due to their experiences with migrant children often failing in schools. Why are they failing? It is certainly *not* because they are bilingual. Rather: they are *not yet* bilingual. They are thrown into the English school system with no or too little bridging support. Or the families may come from cultures with expectations of school that are very different to the Australian system. Research has shown that migrant children fare much better in bilingual classes than in the "sink or swim" situation. usually, teachers do not know about such programs and the associated research, but react well to parents telling them about the positive affects of bilingualism on children's cognitive and academic development. There will be more detail on how to counteract criticism of raising child-ren bilingually in the June issue next year.

By the way, many children do great, even when placed into a "sink or swim" situation in school.

You can find more extensive information about this in: Bialystock, E. (2001) *Bilingualism in Development: Language, Literacy and Cognition*. Cambridge: C.U.P. This book is available through academic libraries or bookshops as well as DA. Or drop me a line on my email address for a list of articles on the topic.

## Resource Review

Did you know that there is considerable material in languages other than English stacked away in public libraries? Among the gems for bilingual families are collections of **children's books** in the following public library clusters (approx. # of items in brackets based on an overview from a few years ago):

Aboriginal	Yarra-Melbourne (27)
Albanian	Goulbourn Valley (9)
Arabic	Moreland (979) Darebin (400)
Cambodian	Dandenong (117) Stonnington (18)
Chinese	Maribyrnong (919) Yarra-Melbourne (522) <i>note: type unspecified</i>
Czech	Port Phillip (11)
Croatian	Darebin (309) Moreland (180) Yarra Plenty (140)
Dutch	Eastern (25) Frankston (21)
French	Moreland (428) Boorondaara (225) Stonnington (196)
German	Yarra-Plenty (182) Stonington (165) Boorondaara (101)
Greek	Boorondaara (934) Yarra-Melbourne (904) Darebin (570)
Hebrew	Port Phillip (210)
Hindi	Moreland (123)
Hungarian	Port Phillip (32)
Italian	Yarra Plenty (1269) Darebin (1100) Moreland (1093)
Indonesian	Moreland (61)
Japanese	Stonnington (58) Eastern Regional (36)
Macedonian	Yarra-Plenty (369) Darebin (104)
Maltese	Yarra-Plenty (101) Brimbank (45)
Polish	Maribyrnong (142) Port Phillip (124)
Romanian	Dandenong (19)
Russian	Port Phillip (308) Stonnington (74)
Serbian	Darebin (93) Moreland (83)
Somali	Moreland (8)
Spanish	Moreland (563) Maribyrnong (449)

Questions & Answers

**Q:** My husband speaks German, and I speak Spanish. Our son is 6 months old. Will he be able to learn both our languages as well as English?

**A:** There are many examples of children speaking 3 languages. In all those cases the children have a rich language input and a need to speak all 3 languages. If you and your husband always speak your own language with your son, he will associate Spanish with you and German with your husband, and he will learn the differences between the languages. Being consistent also provides the maximum input in each language. If you mix the languages, your child will learn to mix. Try some of the ideas in the article on page 1 on enriching your language when talking with your child. Whether your son learns to speak both will lastly depend on the input he receives.  
Good luck!

**Q:** How do we get our toddler to speak Russian? She translates what is said to her and replies in English.

**A:** It is probably faster for her to answer in English. This could be so because: (a) words come to her first in English, (b) English words are easier to pronounce, (c) she does not know the Russian words, (d) she is not able to put words into sentences as well in Russian as she is in English. Try the following: When your daughter replies in English, say in Russian: "Oh you mean/want XYZ. Can you say I WANT XYZ?" Then praise her for any attempt. Repeat it at least once more and continue with your activity. This gives your daughter a very direct model to learn from. If she does not attempt to imitate your model, don't get upset. Try again next time.

Watch out for strategies to motivate children in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Resource Review cont.

Tagalog	Moreland (19)
Turkish	Moreland (880)
	Yarra-Plenty (305)
	Hume (180)
Vietnamese	Yarra-Melb. (745)
	Maribyrnong (632)

There are smaller holdings in many more libraries. And many libraries might have extended their collection. For a full catalogue ask at your local library or go to your local library site [//librariesvictoria.net](http://librariesvictoria.net). To borrow these resources, take up membership in the relevant library cluster – which is free! – and ask the librarian how you can order books to come to the library closest to you. It is also possible to do this by yourself from your home computer. Librarians will help you with getting material from libraries all over Victoria.

Next issue: **children's videos**

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**Business Review**

Have you heard of  
**The Little Language School?**

**The Little Language School** is a small private school run by Ms Beatrice Glattauer in the leafy suburb of Wattle Glen.

Beatrice has grown up as a German-Spanish bilingual in Argentina. Later she learned and lived French and Italian. Now she teaches German, French, Spanish and Italian in her **Little Language School**.

Beatrice is full of life and fun. Her classroom with beautiful garden views is spotted with a wide variety of fun teaching re-sources such as puppets, puzzles, books, games, music, role-play props, a beautiful dolls' house and a puppet theatre!

The collection of stimulating materials is ever-increasing. Finding new materials is a hobby for Beatrice. She travels the world looking for puppets. The collection of puppets needs to be seen to be believed: witches, turtles, ...

All materials are used for language development. With the help of video and audio equipment new materials are produced together with the students during classes. Every lesson is a new experience!

Beatrice's speciality are classes for young children. She really enjoys role-playing herself and has a never-ending store of ideas which entice her young learners to participate.

She teaches all ages including 2 Montessori classes, students at Melbourne University and La Trobe University, and children, adults and adolescents in groups

or individually on her own premises.

As for adolescents, my 17-year-old son and I took French classes from Beatrice for two years. He has gained much motivation to continue French in school through her. We now have a wonderful video tape with self-written puppet plays to remind us of what we have learned and the fun we had!

In the meantime, my son has moved on to a group class for teenagers on Sunday mornings, which he enjoys very much They even dance!

To contact Beatrice Glattauer at **The Little Language School** call or write:

Address: 6 Valley Rd  
Wattle Glen  
VIC 3096

Phone: 9438 3113  
Email: [tomglatt@bigpond.com](mailto:tomglatt@bigpond.com)

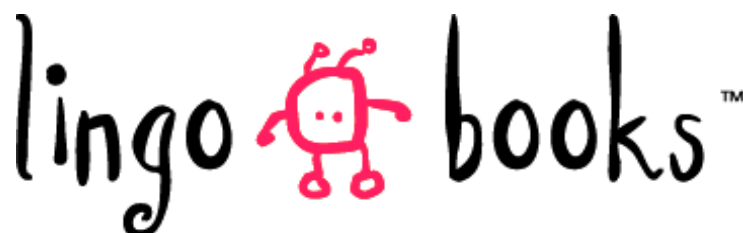
# Bilingual Books for Toddlers

Lingo Books creates bilingual books in a unique lift-the-flap style. English words are underneath the flap, and you choose which language is printed onto the flap itself.

They're ideal for grandparents, gifts, fundraising or simply linking your heritage to your children.

Prices start are \$8.95 for the FUNdamentals™ range (0 to 3 years), and \$14.95 for story books (3 to 7 years).

Call **1300 137 125** to request a free catalogue, or visit our web site at [www.lingobooks.com.au](http://www.lingobooks.com.au)



## Playgroups in Languages Other Than English

A playgroup is a phantastic place for parents and children to meet others who speak the same language. You can find playgroups for a whole range of languages through "Playgrouping Victoria" Contact them by phone (03 - 9388 1599) or go to their website ([www.playgroup.org.au](http://www.playgroup.org.au)). The following is a list of playgroups and contact people currently available on their website:

**Chinese** in Northcote (Kim 9481 4169).

**German** in Prahran (Stefanie 95107273), Box Hill (Anne 9891 8407)

**Russian** in Collingwood (Natalia 9338 0395)

**Dutch** in Box Hill (Sonja 9432 6165)

**Spanish** in Mitcham (Veronica 9870 0036)

**Japanese** in Northcote (Hiroko 9484 7993), Glen Waverley (Shuko 9590 0679), Brunswick (Maki 0403 698 959)

**French** in St Kilda East (Marie 9505 0006)

**Italian** in Brunswick East (Viviana 9489 0623), East St Kilda (Janetta 0400 033 000)

The *Victorian Cooperative of Children's Services for Ethnic Groups* host playgroups for refugee groups in a range of languages including **Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese, Afghani, Somali, Sudanese, Assyrian**, and more. To contact them, call 9383 2533.

If you would like help with starting a playgroup yourself or receiving support for your existing playgroup, *Playgrouping Victoria* might be the place to turn to.

Membership with *Playgrouping Victoria* is available for a small fee and makes you eligible to borrow their informational video, an extensive manual on a wide range of options for setting up and running a playgroup, a newsletter with tips for families and on parenting, and a magazine with new play and organisational ideas for playgroups. Their notice board might already have people on it looking for you!

Anybody being a member of a playgroup not registered with Playgrouping Australia tell me about it on the phone (9439 4148) or send me an email ([sdrw@ozemail.com.au](mailto:sdrw@ozemail.com.au)) and information about your playgroup will be included in the next newsletter.

# FOREIGN LANGUAGE BOOKSHOP

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  - Harry Potter in 24 languages

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**Classified Advertisements:**

- Looking for families with German-speaking children 3 to 10 years of age to exchange children's books. Franziska 9437 0601.
- We would like to meet other families with Italian-speaking children (girl aged 8, boy aged 14) for social get-togethers. Oppure mamme e figlie da 8 a 10 anni. Telefonare ore pasti ad Anna, 9386 2579.
- Wanted: (a) Japanese books and videos for children, (b) Japanese-speaking babysitter for 2 year-old and 7 month-old children in Glen Waverley. Masae 9886 5416
- Playstation 1 game "World Theme Park" in German, still in plastic wrap, for \$25. Contact Christopher 9439 4148.
- Families interested in starting a Dutch playgroup in the Elwood area, please call Monita 9531 2302.
- Those who are interested in meeting Russian-speaking families for exchanging books, videos, tapes (or playing soccer, table tennis, etc.) are welcome to call Tanya on 9893 4706 after 8pm.

**Community Announcements:**

- The **German** Lutheran Church holds their annual **Christmas market** on Saturday November 29th from 10 am at 3 Albert Ave, Springvale. With 2nd hand books, lovely Christmas decorations, many of them homemade, and yummy German cakes for sale, and a Santa Clause and other activities to delight the little ones, this makes for a lovely family outing. Ph: 9546 6005.
- **Swedish** Church in 21 St Georges Rd, Toorak, holds its annual **Christmas market** on Saturday and Sunday of the first weekend in December. Many of the typical Swedish Christmas decorations use electricity and are particularly suitable for Australian conditions. The market features a stage program with and for children and delicious food. For more information call 9827 5580.
- Everyone is welcome to celebrate **the end of Ra-madan Eid El Fitr** with the Muslim community on Nov. 29th at Zwar Reserve, Corner Jessie & Cramer Streets, Preston. Activities for children and families include multicultural food & entertainment. For more information contact Veronika Pradel Spendier on 9230 4550 or email [vpradel@darebin.vic.gov.au](mailto:vpradel@darebin.vic.gov.au)

**For Commercial Advertisers:**

Many parents of bilingual children in Australia struggle to find the wide range of materials and activities desirable to support children's language development in languages other than English. You have a business which is language related and which can help bilingual families to fill this gap. Here is your chance to help them out and help your business. A perfect symbiosis!

As parents of bilingual children we are looking for:

- Books to buy or hire.
- Games to buy or hire.
- Videos to buy or hire.
- Magazines with fun and educational activities which stimulate language use.
- Visual performances in community languages, live or recorded.
- Classes which enhance our children's good language skills further.
- Activities where our children find others who speak the same language they speak.
- Activities and performances which extend their language knowledge.

Have you got a business which can help bilingual families? Advertise here! A *half-page commercial advertisement* of this size will cost \$50. Consultation on how to enhance your business by tailoring your services to the needs of bilingual families are offered for every advertisement placed. Phone (9439 4148) or email ([sdrw@ozemail.com.au](mailto:sdrw@ozemail.com.au)) to contact Susanne.

**CONTACT:**

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[sdrw@ozemail.com.au](mailto:sdrw@ozemail.com.au)

ABN pending

**Do you want to advertise?**

- **Classifieds:** 30c per word. This is the readers' place to make contacts with other families, sell pre-loved books and games in your home language or ask for language material in languages other than English from other families.
- **Half-Page Commercial Advertisement:** \$50. This includes consultation regarding aspects of your business and activities within your business which are of particular interest to bilingual families. Approx. size: 12 x 18 cm. Maximum 4 per issue. The editor reserves the right to refuse
- **Business Review:** \$100. Half-page article reviewing aspects of your business particularly suitable to bilingual families. Maximum 1 per issue.
- **Small Commercial Advertisement:** \$30. Advertisements are restricted to businesses of interest to families who speak languages other than English at home. Businesses specific to a particular language or advertisement in other languages are welcome. Approx.: 12 x 6 cm. Maximum 2 per issue. The editor reserves the right to refuse
- **Community Announcements:** Free of charge to non-commercial organisations. Announcements must be of interest to families who speak languages other than English. The editor reserves the right to refuse.

**Attention!**

Classifieds, community ads, half-page commercial ads and requests for business reviews need to be submitted no later than 2 weeks prior to the publication date of the intended issue.

**Scheduled publication issues of the "Australian Newsletter for Bilingual Families" for 2004:**

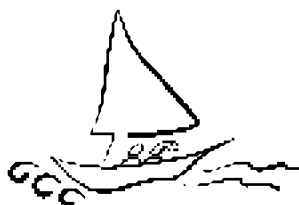
February	4th
April	15th
June	15th
September	15th
November	15th

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  - [ ] **Institution Subscription** to ANBF for 2004 A\$ 23.00.
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**Happy Holidays!**