

Q&A

**Native
Aware**
by native
scientist



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NativeAware
by **native**
scientist

*A collection of interviews about multilingualism
and its challenges and benefits*

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Marianne Guenot

In our first interview, we asked Dr. Marianne Guenot, a bilingual researcher, how it was like to grow up in a French-American family.

How did you hear about Native Scientist and what made you get involved?

I first heard about Native Scientist through Joana, the co-founder of Native Scientist. When she first described the purpose of this organisation, I immediately related to it, having grown up in France in a French-American family, I am very familiar with the trials and advantages of bilingualism. I thought the idea of incentivising bilingualism through scientist inspiration was marvellous, and I wished I could have had access to this growing up.

Please, tell us about your work and career path so far.

I've always been very interested in how pathogens interact with our body's cells.

To pursue this interest, I completed a masters in microbiology and immunology in 2009 in the University of Bordeaux Segalen, in the south west of France.

I stayed in Bordeaux to do a PhD, during which investigated how the parasites which cause malaria by infecting red blood cells can activate a particular type of cells from our immune system called the gamma delta T cells, in hope to use

those cells to combat malaria. After finishing my PhD in 2012, I joined Imperial College in London to start a post-doctoral position, for which I am now studying how a pathogenic microbe called EPEC (for enteropathogenic Escherichia coli) modifies our body's cells, and how that can influence the disease.

What are you more fascinated about in projects you've done so far?

The thing that fascinates me the most about my projects is how even after hundreds of years of studying biology, we are still constantly surprised by revolutionary discoveries which completely change our point of view.

For me, the study of the immune system is a perfect example of this. Practically every week a new publication comes out which describes a completely unfathomable mechanism used by the immune cells to protect the body.

For instance, a couple of years back, it was suggested that some immune cells can actually throw their own DNA to use it as a catching net to bundle up microbes around them. Who could have imagined that would be true?

How many languages do you speak and how important have these skills been in your life?

According to me, I speak about four languages. When I actually put them to the test, it turns out I can only properly speak two, English and French (although I maintain that I also speak Spanish, regardless of how little is understood when I speak it). It turns out that, at least for me, learning a new language now that I am an adult is not as easy as having someone teach me a language throughout my childhood!

In science, you have the opportunity to meet many scientists from all over the world, and English is used as the standard language of communication. Having been raised speaking English even though I lived in France has been an incredible advantage, because in my opinion in France, English is taught in such a way that many French people have an innate aversion for this language. This is all the more important that my parents had been actively discouraged to teach me English, for fear of impairing my learning of French. Who knows how far I would have gone in science, had it not been for my parents?

Personally, I also believe that knowing another language has taught me to not be scared to babble in other languages. I know the international language of pointing, and signing, and mumbling random words, which has helped me through my many travels abroad. It is also a great gateway to another culture, knowing several languages has allowed me to trust that no matter how far away a culture is from mine, I will eventually always be able to understand it.

Knowing another language as a child has taught me to not be scared to babble in other languages.

Would you incentivise your children to be bilingual?

I definitely would. I love remembering our family dinners, when we'd ask to pass the peas in French and ask what was for dessert in English.

I think learning several languages growing up can only increase a child's open-mindedness and curiosity. My brother recently got married to a Colombian woman, and they hope to raise their children as trilingual French-American-Spanish speakers.

Susana Irving

Passionate about her cultural background, Susana Irving, a researcher and mother of two, tells Lidia Rubio how “language is key to that sense of belonging.

Please tell us who lives at home and how many languages are spoken.

We are a family of four. I am Portuguese and my husband is Scottish. We live in London and the children attend a British school, so English became the dominant language. Nevertheless, I always speak and read to the children in Portuguese and they are also exposed to ancient Scots because many rich idiomatic expressions still populate the English spoken in Scotland! Furthermore, we also have children's books written in Scots that are delightfully funny and the boys love them.

What do you think about Native Scientist's initiative to promote the use of the home language among bilingual children?

I think Native Scientist is a fantastic concept that is not only inspirational but also aspirational. It helps to empower and support the bilingualism choice, validating the children's journey within their educational setting.

Why are you keen in bringing up your children bilingual?

For us it felt natural to become a bilingual family. We are both immensely passionate about our cultural backgrounds and language is key to that sense of “belonging”. When the children came along we

had to share with them that potential. Although we admit that it is a big commitment, it is one we have done wholeheartedly. At times, it can be a bit emotionally draining and, especially for the parent of the minority language, it can be relentless. Sometimes it does feel that you are a simultaneous translator.

What is the best advice you can give to parents who are concerned about raising a bilingual child?

The best advice I can give to parents is consistency! And with this I mean, for example, one parent, one language.

What is the funniest or most common misuse of language that your children do?

There are many crazy language abuses. But for example: we all know that when a child gets called to do a task they will try and delay it. And in Portuguese you might say “Já vou!” which translates to English as “Coming!” and our youngest son will say “I’m vou’ing!”. Another very common mistake is “without you” which in Portuguese translates “sem ti”, but the children (and some known adults) will say “sentigo” following the same line of thought as in “contigo” (“with you”).

Joana Ferrão

This month we spoke to Joana Ferrão, a marketing professional mother of one boy who manages two languages at home, English and Portuguese.

Please tell us who lives at home and how many languages are spoken.

I live with my partner and my son Alex in Edinburgh, Scotland. My partner is Scottish and I'm Portuguese. Alex was born here and goes to nursery therefore English is his primary language. I only speak Portuguese with him and his dad speaks English and/or Portuguese, depending on the complexity of the conversation.

What do you think about Native Scientist's initiative to promote the use of the home language?

The great thing about initiatives like Native Scientist is that they bring together researchers, students, parents and teachers, establishing an amazing bond in the bilingual community. The advantages end up being vaster than only the promotion of the home language among the children.

Why are you keen in bringing up your child bilingual?

The primary reason to bringing up my child bilingual is emotional. I never considered speaking any other language to my son than my native one. It's linked with affections and also enables him to speak with all the relatives he has in Portugal. Then you have all the research about the benefits of bilingualism which makes you realise what an amazing world of opportunities it is for the

children. It has been a rough road but very rewarding. Just now, the biggest hurdle I find, and because the conversations are getting more elaborate, is to speak with him in Portuguese among non-Portuguese speakers.

What is the best advice you can give to parents who are concerned about raising a bilingual child?

Speak only your language with your child. That's the best advice I can give you. Make sure he's in contact with the language as much as possible, either being with you, in a playgroup, a nanny, books, toys, movies in your language or your family. And just as important as the above: don't spend your energy on concerns, and focus on the multiple benefits; focus on what you can do rather than on what you can't.

Like so many other things in life, we'll want to overcomplicate this, but in time, it will reveal itself easier and simpler. And finally, appreciate every achievement as result of your persistence – because it is.

What is the funniest or most common misuse of language that your child does?

He completely mixes both languages now. He does say 'I like' or 'I want' followed by Portuguese words. It sounds very funny.

Jean-Marc Dewaele

This month, Lidia Rubio spoke to Dr. Jean-Marc Dewaele, father of a quadrilingual daughter and Professor of Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism at Birkbeck.

Please tell us about the work you do and your opinion on multilingualism.

I do research on individual differences in psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, psychological and emotional aspects of second language acquisition and multilingualism.

I have published over 160 papers and a monograph entitled *Emotions in Multiple Languages* (2nd edition in 2013). This was based on feedback from over 1500 participants and contained a systematic analysis of the effect of three clusters of independent variables on language perception and language choice for the communication of feelings in general, for anger and swearing, as well as self-perceived proficiency and foreign-language anxiety. Those who had started learning a foreign language later in life reported lower levels of self-perceived competence in oral and written skills.

They also tended to use the foreign languages less frequently to communicate emotions; they rated the positive characteristics of the foreign language lower and reported higher levels of foreign-language anxiety in different situations.

Foreign languages that had been acquired only through formal classroom instruction were used less frequently to communicate emotions than foreign languages that had been learned naturalistically or which had also been used in authentic interactions outside the classroom (mixed context). The same pattern emerged for self-perceived competence and foreign-language anxiety in different situations: instructed learners felt less competent and more anxious than mixed and naturalistic learners.

It thus seems that both age of onset and context of acquisition resonates for years after the end of the active "learning phase" of the foreign language.

Other research showed that multilinguals report significantly lower levels of foreign-language anxiety, score significantly higher on tolerance for ambiguity, cognitive empathy, cultural empathy and open-mindedness.

The main point is that multilinguals are aware that their own values, beliefs and communicative practices are not necessarily shared by their interlocutors, and that they are more confident communicators. I'm a father of a quadrilingual 18-year-old daughter (English, French, Dutch, briefly Urdu - which she lost - as first languages, and Spanish as a second language (learnt at school). I hold a black belt in Go Kan Ryu karate.

What do you think about Native Scientist's initiative to promote the use of the home language among bilingual children?

It is an excellent initiative. Research shows that a good knowledge of the home language (especially literacy) is linked to better performance in the school language.

**Are children ready to learn language simultaneously?
What is the best age to do it?**

Children's brains are like sponges, there is no danger of it bursting with linguistic information. Start from birth and never give up. Check my paper from 2000 entitled Trilingual first language acquisition: exploration of a linguistic miracle, (freely downloadable from www.academia.edu). You probably speak more than one language or know people who are multilingual.

Who is your role model in terms of multilingualism and how do you think he/she achieved it?

I have no role model. There are many more multilinguals than monolinguals in the world – and they wouldn't question the multilingualism because it's just natural. Of course, to learn a foreign language, motivation and enthusiasm are crucial, together with experience in using the language in real-life contexts.

What is the best advice you can give to parents who are concerned about raising a bilingual child?

Probably best to start with "One Parent One Language" policy and be systematic in language use with children. Read to them in the language at bedtime. Don't abandon using a language if the child refuses to answer in that language.

Research shows that multilinguals report significantly lower levels of foreign-language anxiety and score significantly higher on tolerance for ambiguity, cognitive empathy, cultural empathy and open-mindedness.

Natalia Kuznetsova-Rice

This month we had the pleasure to interview Natalia Kuznetsova-Rice. She is the founder of the 'Russian Moms in London' community and she raises a 3-years-old daughter.

Please tell us who lives at home and how many languages are spoken.

I'm Russian and my husband is American. So I hope our almost 3 years old daughter will be bilingual. So far the domineering language is English, even though she has a Russian mum, a Russian nanny and a Russian nursery twice a week. I do try to make sure the two languages are used 50 per cent in her environment but her actual usage is more like 75/25 per cent. She understands both perfectly well though. She still mixes the two languages, which provides an ongoing entertainment because it's just too funny at times.

What do you think about Native Scientist's initiative to promote the use of the home language?

I consider Native Scientist to be very helpful for families like mine, as we need encouragement and a good piece of advice. There're always families who find it too difficult to put an everyday effort into maintaining bilingualism but those who keep doing that really give a great gift to their children. So thank you Native Scientist for being there for families who do try.

Why are you keen in bringing up your child bilingual?

My roots are in Russia so it's very important to me that my daughter is properly connected to the roots

of our extended family. The first practical concern is just about her being able to communicate with grandparents and cousins. The second, a deeper one is about being able to immerse into the rich Russian culture, art and literature and being able to understand the Russian character.

What advice can you give to parents of a bilingual child?

By no means, I would consider myself an expert in the field as I am still adjusting my own approach to this subject. Talking to "proper" bilingual children aged five, seven or ten, I always get fascinated what an amazing skill that is. Those kids are already much more proficient in using two languages than me. I'd like my daughter to have that skill. I think London is an amazing place to raise bilingual children: plenty of bilingual schools, nurseries, playgroups and of course Native Scientist. So with just a bit of planning it can work very well.

What is the funniest misuse of language that your child does?

Oh don't get me started on that one. I'm obsessed about those things and my Facebook wall is basically a collection of funny bilingual things said by my daughter. The audience adores and asks for more. I carefully collect those and I hope to present them to my daughter when she's 16.

Nadia Smith

This month we interviewed Dr. Nadia Smith, a bilingual mathematician at the UK National Physical Laboratory. She is also a mother of a 2-year-old boy.

From a professional point of view, being bilingual opens many doors and is valued very highly by an employer.

How did you hear about Native Scientist and what made you getting involved?

I heard about Native Scientist through Tatiana Correia and Lidia Rubio who are both involved with it and worked at National Physical Laboratory. I was born in the UK but my family moved to Spain when I was 7 years-old so I grew up and spent most of my life there. I am fluent in Spanish. I think what Native Scientist does by promoting bilingualism at schools through science is an excellent idea.

Please, tell us about your work and career path so far.

I work in the Mathematics and Modelling Group at National Physical Laboratory and I do a lot of computer simulations of experiments which take place at the lab.

For example, I did some work together with Tatiana where we modelled a sample of electrocaloric material, to predict the temperature increase or decrease in the material after applying or removing an electric

field. The benefits of having a model are, between others, that you can understand what is happening in the whole volume of the sample (whereas experimentally sometimes one can be limited to looking at only the surface due to the size of the sample), or you can run the same model for different materials and experimental conditions, without added costs and complications of setting up the real experiment. I also do other work that has to do with the calculation of uncertainties, data analysis and optimization algorithms. I did my degree in Mathematics at the Universidad Complutense of Madrid, in Spain, where I also completed my Masters in Mathematical Research and my PhD in Applied Mathematics. My PhD was on modelling food that is processed using high pressure. I looked at the effects high pressure had on the bacteria and enzymes present in food and how it could help inactivate these, and thus prolonging its shelf life.

Also I worked on some fluid dynamic models to see how the pressure, which in this case was applied via a pressurising medium, was distributed throughout the food sample. After finishing my PhD in 2013 I started working at NPL, where I have been since.

What was your most important scientific contribution so far?

This is a difficult question for me to answer, because of the nature of the work I do, I'm involved in many different projects, so it's not easy to choose the most important one. I guess what I most enjoy about the work I do is to see how Mathematics can be used to help solve many different problems, and to learn about all of the different applications.

How many languages do you speak and how important have these skills been in your life?

I am fluent in both Spanish and English. When I was living in Spain, being fluent in English was a great advantage. From a professional point of view it opens many doors, and was always valued very highly by an employer. All of the scientific work nowadays is written in English, so I was lucky I didn't have to worry about that. Also, it allowed to collaborate easily with members of other international institutions (such as CSIRO in Australia and the University of Limerick in Ireland). From a personal point of view I think being bilingual helps to really understand the culture and people from the country you are living in.

I feel lucky that I can share the sense of humour with both my English and Spanish friends.

Do you incentivise your child to be bilingual?

Yes, certainly. I have a two years-old son, and I speak to him in Spanish. As we live in the UK, my son is constantly exposed to English, but I make sure he listens to as much Spanish as possible. I speak to him in Spanish all the time, try to get Spanish books for him and we have some Spanish cartoons on DVD. At the moment he's learning to speak and most of his words are in English, but he says some in Spanish and even knows a few words in both. In this case, he uses the English word with my husband and the Spanish word with me. I'm hoping that he will grow up to be bilingual, which I think is a great asset to have and would be a shame not to make the most of the opportunity.

Paola Alpresa

This interview is brought to you by Lidia Rubio and features Paola Alpresa, a PhD student at Imperial College London with an interest on education.

How did you hear about Native Scientist and what made you getting involved?

I learnt about Native Scientist through SRUK/CERU, an association that promotes communication within the community of Spanish Researchers working in the United Kingdom. My affiliation to this organisation has been key to meet great people - some of them now good friends -, attend very interesting talks and learn about initiatives such as Native Scientist.

I have always enjoyed communicating with kids; I find it easier than with most adults. I started at Native Scientist just as a volunteer, unsure on how to best manage my time as a PhD student (I tend to engage in too many things!). After my first experience in a Spanish School Project, and added to an increasing interest on education, I offered myself to be the Spanish manager.

Please, tell us about your work and career path so far.

I have taken a long road to get a PhD. I completed my degree on Aerospace Engineering in 2007 with no motivation to be an engineer; ever since, I have been seeking my place in society. I went into different research jobs but never felt passionate about it, so I kept changing field in the quest for motivation. In the meantime, I participated in NGOs and social movements through volunteering work. I learnt what it is not on common books, nor in the standard media outlets. I learnt about global and local issues, and the difficulty of changing them.

Now, my path has been revealed clear to me. I want to finish my PhD and move on into transforming education: our most valuable tool to create a better world for everyone. It is not an easy challenge, but it is definitively worthwhile.

What are you more fascinated about your current projects?

My aim is to have a say about education in the future. Therefore, my most exciting project at the moment is The Adventures of Mosaic Planet: an intercultural summer camp in Spain with the aim to gather Spanish-speaking children from different countries to enjoy science, arts and nature!

How many languages do you speak and how important have these skills been in your life?

My Native language is Spanish, which I speak with an Andalusian accent, even though I have been leaving abroad for many years. I speak English fluently, and used to speak good French after my Erasmus year in France - I would lie if I say I still do. Languages fascinate me. Every new place I go, I try to learn the language, that is how I started learning Italian, German, Swahili... I found Vietnamese impossible! I think it opens up your mind, it teaches you about the culture, and gives you the opportunity to communicate with people of different origins. If I were to be asked for a superpower, it would be to know all the languages on the planet!

Would you incentivise your children to be bilingual?

Of course I would! I think it is a great gift to offer to your child. I have seen myself struggling - still am - to improve my English, which feels like a never ending, lifetime task. On the contrary, I have seen friends brought up in a bilingual environment naturally speaking both languages with no effort! I am so jealous!

If I were to be asked for a superpower, it would be to know all the languages on the planet.

Tiago Alves

This month Joana Moscoso interviewed Tiago Alves, a physics undergraduate student at King's College who took part in one of Native Scientist pilot activities three years ago.

Tell us a little bit about you.

My name is Tiago and I am 18 years old. I was born in London to two Portuguese parents who both believed in a strong cultural upbringing in the Portuguese community. My parents decided to move to London in 1992 after they had gotten married and I was born 5 years later. I attended the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School in Holland Park from the age of 11 to 18 and since I have finished, I am now in the course of beginning my university experience at Kings College London.

How many languages do you speak and how important have these skills been so far?

Learning languages was always something that I was very comfortable doing from very early on, quickly learning to speak Portuguese before beginning to attend Nursery and not knowing much English. I can say that this has allowed me to grow as an individual and flourish in other areas of both Languages and Science due to my ability to be cognitively aware in two languages. I began to learn Spanish and French in school and was always one of the top of my class due to the similar structures and grammar which I picked up from the languages that I already knew. For this reason, I can say that learning Portuguese was a blessing, allowing me to achieve a very quick and easy understanding in other Latin based languages.

However, I cannot say that it was always easy; I enjoyed Portuguese school and learnt a lot from it but due to the long hours spent learning and revising it, I felt like there was just too much to do in such a small period of time. Overall I believe that it has been an asset because it has broadened my knowledge and will help me in future at meeting new people from all over the world.

How did you hear about Native Scientist and what made you getting involved?

I was introduced to Native Scientist when a team of Portuguese scientists visited my Portuguese School as part of their School's Programme about 3 years ago. By that time, I already knew that I wanted a career in science and I knew that I couldn't miss this amazing opportunity and even though this lesson was at a different time slot than my usual lesson, I asked my teacher if I could attend anyway. From there, I met a wide variety of scientists ranging from a wide variety of subjects such as Biology and Physics which gave me an insight into what it was like to become a scientist.

It was from here that I decided to try and get involved, being formally introduced into what it is to be a member of Native Scientist by Dr Tatiana Correia, one of the co-founders of Native Scientist. From that moment, I knew that I wanted to be a part of this community as I want to give back the same experience that I received to the youth that one day will form the elite scientists of the future.

What's the best thing of being raised in a multicultural and multilinguistic household, school and city?

I was born into a city that in itself is one of the most multicultural and complex societies of the modern world, housing people from all over the globe. I believe that for this reason I was born in the perfect place to allow me to understand the various ways of life and the different cultures that London has allowing me to learn and understand the variety of different backgrounds of other people. The part I enjoy the most from this is the fact that we celebrate the individuality of a single person by allowing them to embrace their culture as well as allowing others who may not be of the same culture join in. This sense of community cohesion has allowed me to see that when people work together the community seems to flourish. This sort of mentality has allowed me to appreciate the history behind of the various different countries and quench my thirst for the knowledge from around the world.

About your passion for physics: where do you think it comes from?

I remember during primary school I always looked forward to my science lessons having learnt about the importance of Sir Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein in the science we know today. Obviously I did not understand any of the concepts but the thought always stuck with and allowed me to persevere in reading up on different concepts over the years. I began to watch online lectures as well as science documentaries, of which my favourite has to be the BBC's Horizon documentary called, "Strangeness Minus Three" which included talks from great minds like Richard Feynman and Murray Gell-Mann. This documentary intrigued me because I had just began learning about it in my Physics A-levels and I understood the concepts making me want to be a part of it so that in the future I can say I helped contribute to science with Physics was the medium that I saw myself doing it through.

Margarida Rodrigues

This month Joana Moscoso interviewed Margarida Rodrigues, a postgraduate designer from the Chelsea College of Arts who lead the recent Native Scientist re-branding.

Tell us a little bit about you.

My name is Margarida Rodrigues, I'm 22 years old and I grew up in Portugal. My father was born in NY so I was raised to understand the importance of multicultural communication and exchange. Traveling is one of my favorites things because it's the only way I get to truly understand other people and countries, ways of life and points of view.

We think the way we speak, so different languages mean different ways of thinking. It's a very special kind of freedom.

How many languages do you speak and how important have these skills been so far?

I fluently speak Portuguese and English, although I also know my ways around Spanish and French. All of these were part of my country's education programme, so it was natural for me to learn it, just like any other subject such as science or history. Knowing more than one language allows you not only to understand people around the globe but also allows you to better understand the world around you. We think the way we speak, so different languages mean different ways of thinking. It's a very special kind of freedom.

How did you hear about Native Scientist and what made you getting involved?

I first heard about Native Scientist through PARSUK (Portuguese Association of Researchers and Students UK). And although Native Scientist is about empowering immigrant communities through science, my interest in this non-profit enterprise was on the design point of view. As a Portuguese student living in London, I was very keen on understanding how designers could help communities. My research ended up focusing on how graphic design can influence the social conscience. Through visual communication, I could explore

how designers both contribute to and reflect the social and cultural identities of society.

The new NS branding. Tell us a little bit about the re-branding process.

The re-branding process was very interesting and challenging indeed. Starting from the basic concepts and creating a new look that can properly communicate to parents and children was not a simple task. After a lot of brainstorming with Joana and Tatiana, we were able to set it straight. It had to have this very clean, friendly and professional appearance. Parents would have to be able to immediately trust it and to see this as a valuable activity to their children. For me, this was an amazing experience. In the end, we're telling a story through the visuals, seeking to inspire change and creating meaningful experiences.

About your passion for design: where do you think it comes from?

Since I was child, I used to wonder how things we use every day were made and where did they come from. I think all of this curiosity came from traveling a lot with my parents which has also allowed me to answer a few of those questions and to have a handful of references. I believe the more you see, the more you want to know. In the near future, I plan to have my own design studio where I can be independent and work according to my own believes.

Haru Yamada

This month Marianne Guenot interviewed Dr. Haru Yamada, writer and consultant with a multicultural, multilingual background and more than 10 years of experience in teaching.

Tell us a bit about yourself, why you speak so many languages, and how this helps you in your day to day life.

I am an adult TCK (Third Culture Kid) who grew up moving cultures every few years following my father's professional life. I faced challenges like changing school systems, leaving friends and family, missing out on blocks of social trivia, and trying to relate to people who had a value system placed in a single culture. However, being a TCK also provided me with the powerful sixth sense of being able to see the world from a bird's eye view and stand in others' shoes, and this, in part, came from moving in circles bigger than a single language.

London, now my home, is a petri dish of languages and cultures. In a given day I can hear a dozen different languages and communicate in four of these. Speaking more than one language means being able to see things from more than one point of view, and this, I believe, fosters the ability to create and develop in new ways. I like to write about these.

You're currently writing a book on intercultural business. Why?

As multiple languages accompanied me throughout my childhood and into adulthood, I ended up studying Linguistics, the study of the mechanics of language. Contemporary linguistics includes

a subfield called sociolinguistics, the interaction of society and language, and I went on to research and publish my findings of cross-cultural business communication between Americans and Japanese with Oxford University Press. I am now writing a new series book in intercultural business not only to help improve the quality of long-term professional interactions but also to raise awareness about intercultural communication in general. This I hope will make more memorable and meaningful relationships of all sorts in personal communication as well as occupational ones.

What have you learned while writing this book?

In writing *The Seven Keys to Intercultural Business Communication*, I have learned that the context of intercultural communication has shifted a great deal. There is no doubt social media has reframed the way in which global news enters our homes and the way in which we interact with each other on a daily basis across digital platforms. However, somewhat counter-intuitively, immediately available images in our living rooms have not particularly transformed or improved live intercultural communication. This is because video or audio content can rarely be fully interpreted without sociocultural context.

Most people would agree that language isn't just words and grammar—it's also the culture with a little "c"—the nods and hugs and inside jokes that go along with everything we say and don't say. Just as books and language classes alone cannot improve communication, media images without the little "c" often get misinterpreted or at least not fully understood. We may very well feel like we are so close together that we know celebrities we have never met but at the same time we also know it isn't the same thing as laughing about something silly in a shared language we hold close to our hearts.

How many languages do you speak at home with your family and what is it like living in a multilingual family?

In our home, people hear English, French, Japanese and a healthy dose of *Franglais*. I am not afraid of code-mixing between English and French partly because I am a second-generation multilingual. My mother was a Japanese-English bilingual as she won a scholarship to go study in an American university when Japan was occupied by the United States just after World War Two. Despite her bilingualism, however, she lived with the same fears of the time that her children might not be able to speak a single language correctly. We had strict rules about which nights were English

- or Japanese - only at the dinner table but the siblings continued to code-mix in daily conversations. I can allay the fears of any parent today that I am a living example of someone who code-mixed quite a bit growing up but manages to separate my Japanese from my English.

My children went to a French school in London so they speak native French and English, and code-mix between the two. Apart from being guided by the language of the people with whom they interact, I have heard them say the topic, places, people and circumstance are what drives them to choose one word over another in French or in English. As their father does not speak Japanese, dinner conversations when the four of us are present tend to be in English, French and *Franglais* except when talking about food, then the rivalry between French and Japanese cuisine turns fierce!

How did the children cope with learning so many languages at once?

Learning English and French were not without their difficulties but being in different educational systems presented bigger hurdles. Not only are there differences in terminology but between the ways subjects are taught. However, my grown children will probably say by far the biggest challenge has been in working out multiple identities and social life

that come with belonging to many linguistic groups, particularly during the adolescent years. It is a balancing act that requires tact and sensitivity.

What advice would you have for parents of multilingual families? What could you say to encourage people to immerse themselves in other cultures?

For Heritage language families:

- Seek the support of other multilingual families. It is very difficult for monolinguals and monoculturalists to relate to your experience. This can be frustrating at times particularly when it has to do with academic interests. Particularly for families who wish to guard heritage languages, rather than be disappointed by responses of the monolingual mainstream, anticipate them and move forward with other multilingual families.

For monolingual parents:

- If you are lucky enough to be in the position of choosing language immersion for your children then by all means, go for it!

For all multilingual families:

- Multilingual children are adaptable and they can code-switch and turn off their code-switching with amazing neuroplasticity. This adaptability does not come so easily in switching amongst academic systems, where trying to change an old system can

be difficult if not impossible during the scholastic years of your children.

Chart the bilingual path of your child early and re-evaluate at key checkpoints throughout their development.

**London, now my home,
is a petri dish of languages
and cultures. In a given day
I can hear a dozen different
languages and communicate
in four of these.**

Catherine Filloux

This month, French-English bilingual school teacher Catherine Filloux tells us about her journey to bilingual education, and gives advice to families that are considering raising their children in a multilingual environment.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I am 55 years old, I was born in Marseille in France, and I am the mother of two daughters. I have a degree in Law and I was a ballet teacher for 10 years before I decided to teach primary school children.

What inspired you to teach at a bilingual school like the Wix school?

I started my career in Marseille, in a ZEP (zone d'éducation prioritaire, education action zone). There, most parents didn't speak French at home, but they would refrain from speaking their own language with their children, as sadly, they were often told that learning another language could confuse their children when learning French. After 5 years, I was the headteacher and eventually I moved to another school, also as a headteacher. When my husband was offered a job in London, we decided to accept it.

In London, the head teacher of "l'école de Wix" called me and asked if I would be interested in teaching a special class they were about to create: a class where half of the children were mainly French-speaking and the other half mainly English-speaking. The Wix school was first an English school that was about to close because they didn't have enough pupils. When the head of the French school 'Lycée Charles de Gaulle' was looking for some space, he decided to rent part of Wix building. After a bit of cohabitation, the two headteachers decided to create a bilingual stream with half of the children "lycée registered" and half "Wix Primary" registered. That's when I arrived.

I was given the choice between this class and a "classic" French class but I decided to go for the challenge. I had still in mind what a wonderful experience it had been for my own daughters to learn a foreign language. I lived for 5 years in the Netherlands when my daughters were very young (3 and 1 years old). They both went to a Dutch school and learned the language pretty easily. Learning Dutch had helped them to learn English and German and opened their minds to other cultures.

I started in 2007, opening Y1B (Grande Section for us French). Each year, a new class was created. Now, I am the coordinator of the bilingual stream.

We also had to create a special curriculum that would match both the English and French national curricula! The French government signed a contract with Wandsworth borough and this agreement still rules our bilingual stream. Of course, we have to revise and rewrite this curriculum every time one of the national curriculum changes!

What are the challenges to teaching in a bilingual school?

You understand now that we don't teach only bilingual children, but also French or English monolingual children who have to learn for half of the week in a foreign language; children who speak neither French nor English; or children who are trilingual... The challenge is to make sure that all the children can make progress, whatever linguistic level they have when they start.

We, as teachers, have to think about the difficulties that the pupils may face in each lesson. We have to choose our own words carefully and often add gestures or pictures to our speech to make sure that everyone can understand. And we must think about ways to guide the monolingual parents so that they can supervise their child's homework. Teaching only 2,5 days a week is also a challenge. We always have the feeling that we

are running after time and sometimes we feel sorry for the children who have to follow this crazy rhythm, although the vast majority of them seem to cope quite well.

But it is still a great pleasure to teach bilingual children because we are always amazed by the way children make links between the languages, the curiosity and interest they are showing for new words and new languages. We are pleased to see how helpful they are with their peers, translating when a colleague is "lost", and how proud they are to be part of a bilingual class. We also notice that they often are very able and quick at maths and that they have sometimes very personal and original ways of solving problems. We think that they are also more open to other cultures, more capable of adapting to new teachers and to new ways of doing things.

What advice would you have for parents who are considering raising their children in a multilingual environment?

If you are a bilingual or mixed couple, the only advice I can give is: do it! Speak your own language to your child as soon as he/she is born. Make sure he/she also gets cultural references from each language. Don't be afraid if your child starts speaking later than monolingual children, he/she will catch up! Do not listen to people saying that bilingual children have problems at school because they get confused. Some people might even say that bilingualism is making the children dyslexic ... how stupid is that?

If you are a monolingual couple, but are interested in the opportunity for your child to be taught in another language, keep in mind that you should show some interest for the foreign language learned by your

child. The children need to see and understand that you consider the other language as important as your own, and you should show interest for the culture and the country, especially if the foreign language is not the one of the country you live in. You should make sure that your child is exposed as much as possible to the language via books, TV, videos, trips...

Try a bilingual class, but be aware that for some children, it might be too challenging. And if it appears later that your child is dyslexic (that can only be detected after they have started reading), be aware that bilingual teaching (not bilingualism) is not the best for your child, because it doubles the difficulties (they have to learn two sets of phonics, write in two languages...). If your child is suffering in the bilingual class, you shouldn't see that as a failure: there are other ways of raising a child in a multilingual environment!

Speak your own language to your child as soon as he/she is born. Make sure he/she also gets cultural references from each language.

Napoleon Katsos

This month we interviewed Dr. Napoleon Katsos, a senior lecturer at University of Cambridge. The result is this amazing piece written by Marianne Guenot.

In this increasingly Anglicized world, English is king. Students in non-English speaking countries would not question the usefulness of language learning, as not speaking English would be a serious handicap to international competitiveness. However, in an English-speaking country such as the UK, it is tempting to think that students all know the only language they will need to communicate with the rest of the world.

In British schools today, languages are being abandoned in favour of more 'serious' topics, such as STEM subjects. In the latest publication of their annual language trends report, the British Council reported a drop in entries for A-level French and German that is decreasing steadily each year. Teachers have expressed 'deep concerns' about the current state of language learning in schools in England, with some schools dreading that drop in numbers of children sitting the exams could lead to language learning being 'financially unviable'.

We live in a post-crisis society, and cutting a literary subject, a subject which can be seen as extraneous and fanciful, could be seen as a proactive step, however, cutting language learning could have much more dramatic consequences than meets the eye. We spoke to Dr. Napoleon Katsos, a lecturer of linguistics at the university of Cambridge in the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, and a proponent of the Cambridge 'Hold on to your tongue' campaign. With his research, Napoleon is shedding light on how we learn languages, as adults or children, and he is looking into the differences of learning languages with different vocabularies, different grammar and different phonology and pronunciation.

He explains to us why denying a child the opportunity to explore bilingualism is a mistake, and what we can do to fight it.

The language capacity of the UK is quite poor. We have this simplistic rationale that because we speak English, why do we need to learn languages?

Being bilingual to be competitive

"The language capacity of the UK is quite poor. We have this simplistic rationale that because we speak English, why do we need to learn languages? However, the amount of business that the UK is losing out because they don't have people to represent business interests at the level of international trading is incredible."

This was shown by a report conducted by the translation agency Conversis who showed that one in four British companies that are currently or are planning to operate internationally have lost business opportunities because their employees do not possess the necessary foreign language skills.

Moreover, two in five business in the UK say a lack of cultural understanding amongst their newest employees has created a barrier to growth.

"It is important to emphasize the cultural and social advantages of learning languages. Growing up or becoming bilingual has tremendous advantages in terms of opening the world, opening yourself up to communities of speakers that you wouldn't have access to. It is true that languages are carriers of culture. By learning languages, you're not just becoming bilingual, you are becoming bicultural as well."

A challenge for the British education system

"The British government is well aware of the potentially disastrous consequences that lack of language diversity could have on global trading, and in response, the British Academy and the British Council have wide-scale campaigns to promote language learning articulated around two main objectives: the first one, if you are bilingual already, if you have the gift, the advantage of having a different language in your background, don't lose that! The second is to encourage people to add a language. That's where the education system has a huge responsibility to correct the perception of language learning. There's a huge misconception about how hard it is to learn languages."

In 2015, the '#LearnALanguage' campaign was launched to encourage Britons to learn at least one foreign language phrase a day. Also last year, and in order to help the British government out, the University of Cambridge has launched the 'Hold on to your tongue' campaign, as part of the Cambridge Bilingualism Network.

"'Hold on to your tongue' was launched a year ago, and it's about nurturing home languages and making sure people understand and appreciate the importance of

bilingualism. Because there is a very big risk of under-appreciating a language if you think 'this is just what my parents speak.' Moreover, there are different perceptions of the value of a language depending on what language you are referring to. For example, "with German families in the UK, there's very little risk that they will lose German, because German is valued. It's highly esteemed; it has all the characteristics of a prestige language. Same with Japanese, French or Italian. But, with Urdu, Sylheti or Bangla, it is not the case. People don't appreciate the linguistic richness in their families, and they themselves don't believe in the value of their language." To fight this trend, Katsos believes that "there is a real need for GCSEs and A-level students to do Sylheti, Bangla, Polish, all those languages that have enriched the UK in the last ten years, to show to children that who speaks these languages at home can feel proud of them and can study them at school."

Hopefully, all of these initiatives will allow our children to promote a new era of multilingualism in the UK. "[Being bilingual] is one of the most wonderful gifts you can give to your child," concludes Katsos. "Don't deprive your child of this opportunity."

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the linguistic richness
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