Monographs on Bilingualism No.6

Growing up Bilingually:
The Pleasures and Pains

バイリンガルに育ってられたことの喜びと苦しみ

edited by Stephen M. Ryan

A Roundtable Discussion between five people who grew up bilingually under various circumstances.

さまざまな状況のもとでバイリンガルに育った５人による
ラウンドテーブル・ディスカッション。

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On a Friday afternoon in October 1997, the first day of the Japan Association for Language Teaching 23rd International Conference, over a hundred people crowded into a room slightly too small for them to hear five people discuss their experiences of growing up bilingually.

The five people were:

Marc Sheffner, an Associate Professor at Tezukayama University in Nara, who was brought up as an English-French bilingual and is now raising his four children as English-Japanese bilinguals.

Aya Watanabe, an 14 year old junior high school student, whose Japanese parents are raising her in English and Japanese.

Carla Fantini, an AET working in Hiroshima prefecture, who was raised as an English-Spanish bilingual in the US.

Alexa Ratzlaff, a high school student, who has grown up with three languages: her mother's French, her father's English and the Japanese of her environment.

Tom Merner, an English teacher and conversation school owner, who was raised bilingually by his American mother and Japanese father and is now raising a daughter bilingually

The discussion was organised and led by Mary Goebel Noguchi, Associate Professor at Ritsumeikan University, Program Chair of the Bilingualism NSIG and mother of two English-Japanese bilingual children.

The following pages contain an edited record of the discussion.

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Mary: We know that young people acquire languages easily and it seems like they can accommodate perhaps two, three, four languages at one time. But what happens when people start learning two languages from birth? There is some research that shows that there are some advantages in terms of outlook, mental flexibility and tolerance but we don't know whether there are disadvantages. There has been some suggestion that perhaps language proficiency isn't as great, that people have problems with personal identity, or emotional stability or social acceptance. So, the purpose of this Roundtable is to help people get an idea of what a personal experience of growing up bilingually - or, in some cases, trilingually - means to people who have experienced it in different types of circumstances.

We have five panelists. I'm going to introduce them in the order in which you see them:

Marc Sheffner grew up as a French-English bilingual. He's now an Associate Professor at Tezukayama University, in Nara, and he's raising his four children as Japanese-English bilinguals.

Aya Watanabe has been brought up in Japan. Both of her parents are Japanese but she is being raised as an English-Japanese bilingual.

Carla Fantini is the daughter of a very famous linguist. Many of you may have read the book that her father, Alvino Fantini, wrote about her brother[1]. She's been complaining that he needs to write one about her, too, lobbying very hard. Her mother's Bolivian. Her father's an Italian-American and she grew up speaking both Spanish and English and also able to understand her father's Italian. When she got to college, she activated her passive knowledge of Italian and became trilingual. Now she's in Japan, working as an AET, and is quickly acquiring a fourth language.

Alexa Ratzlaff is 16 years old. She's a junior in high school. Her father speaks English, her mother French and she grew up in Japan, so she's trilingual.

Tom Merner is a Japanese-English bilingual and he's raising his daughter bilingually as well.

So, the two gentlemen are going to talk about not only what it's like growing up bilingually themselves but also what it's like, what they're doing differently perhaps, with their own children.

I'm going to start out by asking each of the panellists to talk a little bit about themselves and how they learned their languages. I've given them a brief introduction but they'll tell you more about the process through which they became bilingual - or trilingual.

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[1] Fantini, A. E. (1985). *Language acquisition of a bilingual child: A sociolinguistic perspective*. Clevedon, U. K.: Multilingual Matters.

Marc is going to start.

Marc: I was born in Britain. My father is British, my mother is French and I am now married to a Japanese and have four children and live in Nara.

My father is British, fluent in French and Italian, and his English is pretty good, too! My mother is French, with a French mother and a British father, but her parents separated when she was young. She's fluent in French and English.

I was born in Brighton, Sussex, but my parents moved to Paris, with my father's job, when I was three months old and took me with them. So French was actually the first language I started to speak. It's literally my mother tongue but it's not the language I'm most comfortable in now. I spent the first three years of my life in Paris and we spoke only French at home, except when my parents entertained foreign visitors, or English-speaking visitors and then they spoke English with them and I just listened when I couldn't participate or understand.

Then, at three, I came back to England and suddenly my parents (and everyone else) were speaking English, with no French at all. My Mum tells me I was shocked and wouldn't say anything in any language for two weeks. Then I slowly started learning English.

We never lived in France again, but we would often visit for holidays, weddings, birthdays, funerals. We lived in the South of England, so France was not that far away. My parents had a number of French books and records in the house and later my relatives, particularly my French godmother, gave me records, books, and once a subscription to the *Tintin* magazine. My mother read and told me stories in French. I remember in particular *The Jungle Book*, by Kipling, which she read me in French, and which I later learned to read in French, and a sad story called *Le Chèvre de Monsieur Séguin*.

When I grew up I went to school and started studying French in high school I went on to university and studied French and German at Oxford University.

I've been in Japan since 1980. I came here following an interest in a Japanese martial art. I'm married. My wife is Japanese and now we have four children whom we're bringing up in Japanese and English.

Mary: Thank you. Aya, how about you?

Aya: Hello. My name is Aya Watanabe. My parents are Japanese. They both teach English. I only speak English to my mother. And I talk Japanese with my father. I have a brother and I talk Japanese with him.

Mary: I think Aya's a little bit nervous. She was chatting away earlier. She just needs a chance to relax a bit.

OK. Carla?

Carla: Although I was born and brought up in the USA, my first language is actually Spanish. I grew up in rural Vermont, however the custom in our family was always to use Spanish at home and among family members. I'm told that when I first went to kindergarten they gave my teacher a little list with translations of some basic things I might say in Spanish, like: "If she says this, it means she needs to go to the bathroom." So, I really learnt English only once I started going to school. At the end of my first year in kindergarten, my teacher wanted to keep me back because I couldn't communicate enough in English, but my parents persuaded her not to keep me back and soon my English really took off and actually surpassed my Spanish.

My father exposed me to Italian at an early age, too, by telling me children's stories in Italian.

Spanish, as I said, was used at home and with my family members. It was a very strict rule. We travelled to South America to see my relatives pretty regularly, maybe once a year and when I was about 5 or 6 we spent 6 months in Bolivia and I attended first grade there.

One of the questions you asked us to think about was why we are bilingual. My answer is "Why not?" But obviously I guess my parents' first motivation was so that I could communicate with my relatives on my mother's side (grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins). Otherwise I would not be able to communicate with a whole half of my family.

A second important reason was because my parents were very clear that they wanted to bring me up with the richness of all of my heritages (Hispanic and Italian, as well as American). And language provided important access and connections to these heritages.

A third reason was their belief in the importance of development and education through more than one perspective, more than one language, leading to the ability to enter other cultures and other languages easily and well. Once, I remember complaining to my father that my English scores in school weren't very good (although in later years, I was at the top of my English class and even won an award for English). My father's response was: "That may be so, but right now, you know twice as much as everyone else in your class. Not only do you know that two plus two is four, you also know that *dos y dos son cuatro*. And you not only know more, you also know differently. This is something which a monolingual person could never understand."

Mary: Alexa?

Alexa: My mother's French and my father's American. I was born in Japan, so I had no choice about becoming trilingual. Both of my parents spoke to me only in their native languages and I went to a Japanese public school until age 13.

Now I'm studying at Osaka International School, and this is my third year in an English-only educational environment. I am also taking courses in literature with the French CNED correspondence course matching my age level. I go to France every year in the summer to live with my grandparents and there I am immersed in a French-only environment.

I'm interested in other languages. I'm studying Ancient Greek, Latin and also I'm studying Hebrew and International Sign Language, and so I think having three languages makes me interested in other languages.

Mary: Tom?

Tom: My mother's American. My father's Japanese. I was born in Tokyo.

I lived in Japan until I was 6. Although both my parents are bilingual, the language used in the family home was English and they have both been speaking to their children and between themselves almost always in English. My speaking ability in English in my early years was fairly limited, but I did have the basic ability to understand what was being said and could produce very basic utterances in English. My mother often read stories in English to me, but never really started teaching me reading or writing skills, due to the fact, I suppose, that I was still too young and not ready. Being brought up as other children the same age as myself in what could be called a typical Japanese neighborhood, having very little contact with English outside the home and also attending a Japanese kindergarten for two years, my first and dominant language was Japanese.

At the age of six, I entered a nearby public elementary school, but after two months my family moved to Toronto, Canada, for my father's business. Our family spent the next three years there. My life in Canada was quite the opposite from what I had experienced in previous years: I attended a local public elementary school from 1st to 3rd grade and had extremely limited contact with Japanese. My parents continued using English in the home, but my mother tried keeping up my Japanese by giving me lessons and making me practice the *kanji* I would have learnt if I had continued living in Japan. This effort turned into a complete failure as I tried to escape from these studies using any excuse that I could think up. During my stay in Canada, my dominant language switched to English and my ability to produce Japanese was practically lost.

This again was turned around upon returning to Japan and enrolling in a Japanese elementary school. Enrolment in an International School was never considered, my father's policy being to put his children into the nearest public school wherever the family resided.

The life of switching between schools using different languages was repeated again when our family moved to New Zealand and back when I was eleven, and the family finally settled down in Chiba, where I spent the rest of my school years.

I entered a Japanese high school and college by taking the entrance exams as all other Japanese students do and graduated as all other Japanese students do. When I was a teenager, I was basically a receptive bilingual, which means I had little trouble understanding what people were saying but could not express myself well in English at all. After entering college, I started teaching English, with my limited English, and basically taught my students and taught myself at the same time, via the audio-lingual method, repeating sentences over and over, and my productive side came back.

Since my graduation, I have continued to teach English. I married a Japanese wife and have one daughter and currently live in Yokohama.

Mary: The next question I'm going to ask is: what are your best memories of growing up bilingually? Maybe I'll ask two at the same time and ask you to tell your best memories and your worst memories.

Marc: My best memories are of being able to travel a lot. We went to France on holidays and to visit relatives. Flying on aeroplanes, going places, staying in hotels, seeing new faces and places. It was normal in my family to go on a quick trip to France just for a weekend or a week or two and then into Spain or to other European countries. That was perfectly normal, so that was fun.

And there was a sense of accomplishment, as well. It was fun being able to communicate with people. Later, too, when I had to study French at school French just came back to me and I would just come out and say things which I didn't know I knew. It was great, I mean, French was just so easy.

My worst memories? I don't really have any bad memories of being bilingual. I didn't like it when my parents tried to force us to speak French at home; it failed. It was OKfor me because my French was maintained pretty much through my childhood - but my brother and my sister didn't speak French as well as I did. It was hard. They really didn't like it.

I didn't like being forced to speak it, either. There was an expectation that I was naturally fluent in French, but although I could pick it up again quickly whenever we visited France, I was not able to, maintain it to that level while I was in England. I enjoyed the flattery and admiration of people around me, and got into the habit of believing myself to be perfectly bilingual. This balloon was naturally punctured by reality sometimes, and I would feel perhaps unnaturally nervous whenever I had to perform because I had a sneaking suspicion that I was not as good as my press release said I was.

There was some rejection, although this was an exception, from people at school. But really I didn't have any bad memories of it at all.

Mary: Aya. Best memories?

Aya: My best memories are when I went to America when I was 9 years old. I went there alone, without my mother and father, and I didn't have any problems. I enjoyed making friends and meeting people and I was very happy there.

In Japan, I was able to win some prizes in speech contests. I passed the second grade STEP test last year. I'm very proud of it.

I can't think of any bad memories.

Mary: Carla? Your best memory?

Carla: My best memory is travelling. I always enjoy communicating with people in whatever language it happens to be, whether it is gestures or anything. Eavesdropping was always fun. And really meeting people from other cultures and just realising I could talk to them in Spanish.

Worst memories? Again, I really can't think of anything. I remember feeling occasionally frustrated when I couldn't say something that I wanted to say, sometimes struggling a little bit. I remember there was one stage, I think maybe when I was about 12, when I was a little embarrassed to let people know that I spoke two languages but that passed away pretty quickly. Nothing really bad.

Mary: Alexa, your best memory, worst memory?

Alexa: I have a lot of good memories. I love reading and doing research and knowing three languages really helps me because, if I have some interesting subject I want to research, the number of sources available is tripled. I also have the opportunity to read the three cultures' different viewpoints on the subject, giving me a wider range of thoughts. I can recognize cultural biases more easily, and this helps me focus more clearly on my research topic.

It's nice to be able to talk in a language where nobody understands it, so you can say bad things and nobody understands. For example, when I'm in a bus with my sister in Paris and we do not want people to know what we are saying, we speak to each other in Japanese or English. Of course, there may be an obstacle if a group of Japanese or English speaking tourists come into the bus. Then, we are trapped. This is why we quickly learned the International Sign Language alphabet in order to communicate and keep our privacy.

I don't have any bad memories, really, except there was some discrimination in Japanese school but that's because I don't look Japanese. That's all, I guess.

Mary: Tom.

Tom: My best memories are when, like everyone else, I could use two languages. I could experience different cultures: Japanese culture and American culture.

I was able to pick up the language being used where our family moved. Although there were some frustrating experiences, fortunately moving back and forth between English speaking countries and Japan and also being exposed to both languages, I could acquire the language necessary for being mainstreamed into the regular classes fairly smoothly.

My very best memory was not having to study for a subject that all my friends found quite hard. Also I still think that I passed my high school entrance exams and college entrance exams thanks to my English.

I actually do not have so many bad experiences being bilingual, except for instances where I feel the weight of others' expectations, who typically expect a bilingual person to be a balanced bilingual, which is actually a rare case I believe. In my case, I have always felt an inferiority in my English and never really considered myself a true bilingual. I have often felt that my level of English has stayed at the level of a 3rd grader, where my real schooling in English ended, just being able to get around interactions with others with the basic knowledge and command of English I had. I still feel very nervous when encountering topics which require academic language or higher level vocabulary or grammar and also I have no confidence whatsoever when I have to write something.

My worst memories? No really bad memories of the language aspect. Most of my bad memories come from the fact that I was born as a Japanese-American. I have often experienced a feeling of being rootless, not really belonging anywhere. My experiences attending Japanese elementary schools when there were still very few foreigners were terrible at times, being treated as an outsider and called a *gaijin*. Especially for a child that age, having been told repeatedly by my father that I was no different from my peers and brought up to believe I was a normal Japanese, such experiences were quite harsh and often increased the rootless feeling. This eventually did lead to what I believe was a sort of an identity crisis and I have actually asked my mother why she gave birth to me, believing that even my parents couldn't understand my true feelings, not being *haafu*, as others called me.

I got over it, but it did bother me at the time.

Mary: The next question on my list is: What are the merits or demerits of growing up bilingually? To some extent, I think you've covered that but if there's anything else you haven't mentioned, perhaps you'd like to say it. The merits of growing up bilingually. Marc, is there anything that you want to talk about?

Marc: I guess a broader view of the world, knowing the taste and smell of French bread, of French wine, French food and French cigarettes. It was all a little exotic and exciting, and it was great to experience that.

I guess an understanding that people are different in really small and surprising ways. For instance, I mean light switches, you know; they can go left to right or up and down. It's silly but . . . Actually, I just saw a movie. It was an IMAX movie, 3D, and it takes place in France and they've made this French interior. And there's a scene where the lady switches a light off and I just sort of really zoomed in on that light switch. I wanted to see that light switch, to see if they'd got that detail. And they had!

Also an understanding that people are the same in surprisingly obvious ways. We'd go to France and spend two weeks there and I didn't feel it was unusual. I didn't feel that French people were French. I mean I knew they were different but I just felt that they were like an extension. I had my English relatives and I had my French relatives. Amongst my English relatives I had this person who had these characteristics and lived in this kind of house. And my French relatives, it was just another relative who lived in a slightly different kind of house but pretty much it was the same. Like a friend of mine says: "French people are just speaking English, in French!" When you can understand what they're saying, they're saying exactly the same thing that you would say in the same situation, like "Idiot" or "Why doesn't this work?" or whatever. And so I didn't feel there was any big deal about being French or going to France or speaking French. And I still don't feel that it's such a big deal to speak another language.

I enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of translation, of moving from one language to another, managing two languages. I spent hours translating Tintin stories from French into English just for my own enjoyment. I filled many exercise books. When I found some of these years later, I was astonished at all the hard work I had put in: what the heck for? Just because it was fun to do.

There was a feeling of accomplishment, of having done something that other people couldn't do. I felt special and basked in the admiration I got.

Demerits? There was a certain amount of isolation. Being different is a double-edged sword: the admiration is great, but for a while I felt I was a bit weird because I didn't know anyone else who could speak French, apart from my parents. This lasted all through my childhood but I did not pin it just on being bilingual but on my being interested in studying, unlike most of my primary school friends.

Mary: Aya, what about you? What do you think the advantages are?

Aya: I was able to communicate with foreign people. I have met many people from abroad and could communicate with them.

Mary: Carla?

Carla: Quite honestly, it's just all been wonderful for me. Again the merit is being able to communicate with people from other countries, with just people. It's been wonderful.

Mary: Alexa?

Alexa: I can't be nationalistic because I don't really have one single country. Since the languages I speak are part of me, I cannot cut myself up and represent only one nation. They're all equal to me. I don't really regard myself as being a mix. I'm really three things, three different things. I can feel French, sometimes. When I speak French, I become French. When I speak English, I become American. And when I speak Japanese, I become Japanese, even though I don't really look it. When people ask me where I am the most comfortable, I say everywhere. I just cannot choose one country. I feel international. I feel like I don't have any biases.

Demerits? People ask me too many of the same questions over and over again: What is your favorite country? Can you really speak three languages? What do you speak at home? Where were you born? Say something in French, etc. If I ever happen to say that my father is American, my mother is French and that I've lived all my life in Japan, people don't seem to treat me like a human being anymore but simply like a case.

I never really had an opportunity to learn slang. Since I never went to an American or French public school, and my parents only speak to me in their adult language, I never really had the opportunity to hear slang. When I go to the movies with my friends at school and I don't understand a slang word in the movie script, I feel embarrassed to ask what the word means.

Even though I have many friends, finding friends who truly understand me is still a difficult task. People seem to want to be with me because I am exotic. The only ones who can ever understand me are born trilinguals, and they are rare. If I didn't have a sister as my best friend, I would probably be miserable.

Mary: Tom?

Tom: Merits? Being able to communicate with Japanese people and also with English-speaking people. That's a useful thing.

And basically the fact that I have been fairly open to people from other language or cultural backgrounds, always being interested in the diversity of many races, languages and cultures there are around the world and not feeling discriminatory towards people with different values. I truly dislike occasions where people criticize or segregate others simply for a reason that they have a different cultural background and their way of thinking is different.

I have never really felt that I have more merit than others for the fact that I am bilingual, and only consider myself fortunate. I definitely have never felt that I have any advantages in learning my other subjects, a view I have come across in some studies I have read.

I'm still not sure if it has anything to do with being bilingual, but I did face an identity crisis when I was a teenager. I actually felt like I have no roots, that I don't know where I belong. So when people ask me, "Where are you from?" I still have this problem. "Where are you from?" "Um . . . Um . . . Um . . . I was born in Tokyo." When I was a kid, I used to say "I'm from the middle of the Pacific Ocean." The only place I felt comfortable was, for example, with my cousins who were also bilingual and Japanese-Americans. That was a demerit.

However, I did overcome such feelings as I grew up and started to notice the merits of being able to understand two languages and cultures. I went on to believe that I may possibly be able to be of some help to clear up misunderstandings between the two or even other cultures, even though I cannot really say that I am truly bilingual nor bicultural.

Mary: The next thing I'm going to ask is how people around you react when they know you speak two languages. I'm going to ask the people who grew up in Japan to answer that in Japanese. OK? So, I'll start with them.

* How do people react when you speak English with your mother or father? And how did they react when you won a prize in an English speech contest?

Aya: * They were very surprised.

Mary: * Have you had any problems making friends or getting along with the people around you because of it?

Aya: * Not really, since I always talk to them in Japanese. I only really use my English in English lessons.

Mary: * Alexa. How about you?

Alexa: * Well. When I tell people I'm trilingual, they always say, "Wow. That's great." Sometimes, though, when I answer the phone and the friend who is calling was expecting to hear English, they say "Oh, it's not a foreigner! I'll call again later when there's a foreigner there." It's really quite fun.

People are usually surprised when I say that I am a trilingual. Some don't even believe me and think that I am only trying to impress them. They may even think that I am an American living in Japan who only took a year of French in high school and who can say a few words in French and Japanese. I wish people could only understand what a real trilingual is, one who had no choice in growing up immersed in three languages, and one who inevitably had to have three native tongues.

Mary: * Tom, you seem to have had some real problems.

Tom: * I try not to let it get me down.

* My really good friends have no reaction at all to my being bilingual. They treat me like an ordinary Japanese, except when we're arguing!

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* Originally in Japanese.

* One interesting time is when I answer the phone in my own conversation school and the caller hears my slightly unusual Japanese, thinks I'm a foreign teacher and says, "Your Japanese is really good."

Mary: Marc, how about your experiences? Did you get any strange reactions?

Marc: Yeah, I suppose so. Yes, I was considered a little strange. Some people were scornful or insulting, but they were very few and I guess it was mostly envy, because it was easy for me to pass tests. Everyone else had to work hard for something that was very easy for me. I remember one football teammate telling everyone "Oh, he speaks French, like a spastic," which confused me a little, but in the end I decided to take it as a disguised compliment. Most other people just ignored it and it never got in the way of friendships.

But the closest people to me just took it as very natural, so that helped a lot. I mean, that's probably the most important thing. The closest people to me, both my parents, spoke two languages, so they didn't think it was any big deal and they kind of expected me to be able to speak both languages. Monolingual relatives were admiring and envious.

There was nobody else in my school who spoke French and my brother doesn't speak French. He was born in France and then moved to England as soon as he was born, so in a sense there was no reason for him to learn to speak French and he didn't have the opportunity that I did. So, that's not something we share. My sister does speak French. She learnt it in a different way, later. But by that time I'd grown up so we didn't really share that.

Mary: Carla, what about you?

Carla: At school, I think the kids didn't really understand at first. Later they were just like: "Yeah, that's just something about her. She does speak several languages." I know a lot of adults thought it was very cute. But later, I don't remember any envy, or even a sense of awe or admiration.

Mary: This is a question I didn't tell you about ahead of time so it may be unfair. With English and Japanese, the writing systems are different and you're going to have to study both. Did you have to study to learn to read Spanish, or Italian, Carla?

Carla: I did have to study. My writing and reading in Spanish was a lot slower and I didn't like it at all.

Mary: Did your parents force you at all?

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* Originally in Japanese.

Carla: A little bit, but not so much. They encouraged that I write to my grandmother and cousins in Spanish but I never really did.

In high school I tried taking a Spanish class. It was awful. Then I tried taking independent study in high school and that sort of helped. But it wasn't until I started learning Italian that my writing skills in Spanish just really improved.

Mary: Marc, what about you? Did you have to learn a different system?

Marc: I could speak French but I didn't really have to read it or write it. Well, I could read it. I don't know how I learnt to read. I don't remember that at all. I didn't really have to write it very much and I remember when I was 11, I went with my village football club to France and I was kind of the star speaker. I wrote out my speech and I thought it was great. And then I showed it to my mother and she rewrote it. That took me down a peg or two. I could not, of course, be expected to know all the complicated French expressions to be used on such occasions, but not only that - my grammar was all over the place, and the spelling.

So, yeah, I had to work quite hard to study it. That came later, in high school.

Mary: Aya, are your parents teaching you to read English?

Aya: No, only talking. So, I learned to spell at English class. I attend English class because I have to learn to spell and read.

Mary: With your younger brother, too?

Aya: My Mom teaches him to read and she gives us homework, reading and writing homework and vocabulary work.

Mary: Thank you. How about you, Alexa? Did you have any reading lessons in French or English from your parents?

Alexa: Well, my Dad read to me in English a lot. And I became interested in reading and so on. I then read a lot in English by myself. Especially when I changed from Japanese school to English school (international school), I had to read in English so that really forced me into it. I have lessons in French now, in high school, so I read a lot in French, too. My English reading and French reading are kind of the same. I read similar material so that helps.

Mary: Tom, what about you? When did you learn to read English?

Tom: While I was in Canada, my mother tried very hard to teach me *kanji*. She was worried about me coming back to Japan. She failed. I hated sitting down and studying *kanji* and I made every reason not to do it. So after that my mother just gave up and said it's impossible for a parent to teach her child a different language.

So, after coming back to Japan my parents never really taught me. So the only reading and writing I got was from school English classes, so my writing is very poor. I'm still not confident writing anything. I hate writing.

Audience member: Do you hate writing in both languages?

Tom: I'm not very good in Japanese.

Mary: All right. The next thing I'm going to ask you is about the next generation. The two gentlemen have children. The ladies, not yet. First of all, would you raise your children bilingually, or are you raising your children bilingually? And, if yes, what would you do different to what your parents did?

We'll start with you, Marc. Are you raising your children bilingually?

Marc: Yes. It never occurred to me not to do that, but it is a lot harder than I thought it was going to be. Many Japanese people assume that my children are all perfect bilinguals and I point out o them that one parent cannot provide enough linguistic input for a child to pick up the language. There is more emotional resistance than I had expected.

What am I doing differently? I think I'm making a more conscious effort to bring them up bilingually, perhaps because I live in Japan which is so far from England both geographically and linguistically. I read to them in English, talk to them in English. That's something that my parents didn't do successfully. They tried to speak to me in French but they couldn't keep that up. Especially when we were living in England. And I haven't been very good about it, either. It is very important and I should try very hard to do that. I make sure they watch films and videos in English and generally get as much exposure to English as possible.

Also by choosing the school they go to so that they get as much exposure to English as possible. That's something that my parents didn't really have a choice about, because there was no French school or international school near where we lived.

Trips to Britain and English-speaking countries but that's getting increasingly expensive. We've four of the little blighters. That means one million yen just for the airfare. Any donations gratefully accepted!

The things that my parents did that helped were: They made frequent trips to France. They had a lot of French books around. They had French music and records and things, which they would play. It was never pushed on me but it was there. My mother read to me in French. They didn't force it and they didn't give it up either.

Mary: Aya, do you think that you will try to raise your children bilingually?

Aya: I don't know. My father has been reading to me in English. He invites English-speaking people and lets me watch lots of videos. He often read fairy tales when I was little. I want to do so if I have a child. Maybe, I think, I will marry a native speaker.

Mary: Carla, what about you? You've got a lot of languages to choose from.

Carla: I will definitely try to raise my children bilingually. I think I'll have to go to my father and my mother for lots of advice and help because I think they did a great job.

Mary: OK. How about you, Alexa? What do you think?

Alexa: Sometimes I say to myself, "Well, my friends are going to have kids and get married" so I really want to get married and have kids but then I say "Well, you're going to have a big responsibility to teach them three languages." I just don't want to think about that sometimes. If I had a kid, I'd just have to teach him all three languages, or else I'll feel like I'm not a good parent. So, I'm pretty scared. Choosing only one language out of three which are so much a part of me would just split me up and make me a completely different person. I would become an artificial mother. If my child spoke only one language, I would probably feel like they are not part of me and feel uncomfortable with them. I would also consider myself as an unsuccessful parent. Maybe my only choice would be to hand my children to my parents and have them bring them up, so that they can be just like me.

Mary: Is there anything that you would do differently from what your parents have done? Knowing that your father is in the room.

Alexa: Well, I can only do what my parents have done. That's all, but I don't know if I can, basically. I just don't know.

Mary: Tom, you have a daughter. How old is she?

Tom: She'll be eight next month. When she was born I wanted her to be bilingual and I kept speaking English to her. The problem was that she knows that her father's bilingual. So, she would understand my English but she would choose Japanese to speak to me. And I noticed that her English wasn't clear at all. I believe my three years in Canada really built up the basics of my English and I have no plans of moving anywhere outside Japan. Under those circumstances, I didn't know what to do. Fortunately, there are three international schools in the area where we live and fortunately we only have one daughter. If I had two kids, probably we wouldn't be able to do this. She went to Japanese *youchien* for a year and a half and after that we put her in international school. She just started speaking English, good English. The teachers were surprised, not to say amazed, that she just started to speak.

Mary: So, it was all there and just she needed to have a reason to speak.

Tom: Yeah, she just needed to have a chance.

She now speaks to me very naturally in both English and Japanese, sometimes mixed. We believe our decision was right and the large investment we will have to make is worth it. However, both my wife and I have to try hard getting Emily to acquire Japanese as close as possible to her peer level and get her to learn as many *kanji* as possible, avoiding what happened between my mother and I back in Canada.

Mary: So, your main difference from your parents, then, is that you decided that you had to actively give English to your child.

Marc: Can I add something? I found that, for my daughter, going to an English-speaking school and meeting other kids who spoke English and Japanese was the most motivating factor in getting her to stop feeling embarrassed about having a father who spoke English or speaking English herself and she started being able to speak both languages. That's something that I didn't have and it really made a big difference to my daughter.

Mary: The last question I'm going to ask, before I open it up to the audience, is one that Alexa kind of answered already but I'd like to ask about how you each feel about yourselves culturally. Are you Japanese? American? French? Spanish? British? A mixture? or something different entirely?

So, I'm going to go to you again, Marc. What would you say? Do you look at yourself as one or the other or both or what would you say?

Marc: Most of my growing-up years were spent in Britain and English is the language I feel most comfortable with, so I guess I feel British. But I don't know.

Audience member: I'm sorry to interrupt but could I just ask: Which passport do you carry?

Marc: Are you asking me?

Audience member: Everybody.

Marc: I have a British passport.

I've never had an identity crisis. I don't have any doubts about my passport. I have a very simplistic view about this. I don't feel any particular loyalty to Britain. I mean, I could live anywhere. I don't feel any particular loyalty to France. I don't feel French or British. I suppose I feel European, if anything. But I'm much more interested in just being a human being and finding out what that is. Because I still think, even if you are very sure what your cultural identity is, you've still got the big questions to answer. I guess I feel British, mainly.

Mary: Aya, what passport do you have?

Aya: A Japanese passport. And I feel Japanese.

Mary: Carla?

Carla: I have an American passport. Like Tom, when people ask me where I'm from, I say, "I was born in the States." I don't really label myself as anything. I think every time I spend time in another country, for a good chunk of time, I develop that. So now that it's my third year in Japan, I think I'm developing little Japanese things that I think are going to stay with me for ever. So, the way I explain myself usually is that I have many facets and I'm just polishing off another side of me, so it becomes clear. So if I spend time now in Japan, a bit of my Japanese - I have no Japanese blood - but my Japanese is coming out.

Mary: Alexa, do you want to add anything to what you said before? You kind of talked a little bit about you're French when you speak French and so on.

Alexa: OK. Well, about passports: I have two passports - an American passport and a French passport.

About identity: I think - this is just what I think - but I think that every language has its character, and that when I speak French, I am French. There's a certain character that goes with it. So when I speak French and when I'm speaking English, I'm not the same person.

I don't feel like I am split into three. In fact, I feel tripled. For example, when I speak French, I become French completely and forget about being American or Japanese.

Mary. OK. Tom, what about you?

Tom: Passport? I'm Japanese, meaning I have a Japanese passport. My father never gave me the choice. He said, "You're Japanese. This is your passport."

Audience member: Did you have a choice, I mean theoretically?

Tom: You can, if you apply to the foreign country. My father, from my birth, said: "He's Japanese."

Culturally, as I've said, I think I have both, American and Japanese. Also, with all the countries I've lived in, I sometimes feel it's not 100% - 100%. It's like I only have 60% of Japanese culture. There are certain things I don't understand or I can't get accustomed to. The same with the American side. It just can't be that way. But, I think I have both.

Mary: All right. I'm going to open up this to questions from the audience. I'll call on people, if you raise your hand. Please then address your question either to one specific panellist or everyone in general.

Audience member: Tom, why are you not sending your girl to a Japanese school?

Tom: I don't like Japanese schools. Things have probably changed but there are many things I can't agree with in the way Japanese educate their children, especially the way they handle everything as a group. I noticed that, as soon as I put my daughter in kindergarten, a Japanese *youchien*, it was really instant. I thought she would have a better experience at international school.

Audience member: I'm very interested in writing. How well are you able, not just to write *kanji* but actually to communicate in writing?

Tom: I went to school as a normal Japanese does so I learned all the *kanji* there that all Japanese kids do. I don't have so many problems with writing. Once I grew up, I reached a normal level.

Audience member: But you don't like writing.

Tom: No.

Alexa: Well, my *kanji* is at *chugakkou* [junior high] level but I still read and I enjoy reading. Writing Japanese? Well, I stopped writing at sixth grade, when I changed schools.

Audience member: So are you losing them?

Alexa: I don't feel like I'm losing anything. Of course, I forgot some *kanji* but, I mean, that's natural. Even some Japanese people lose their *kanji*.

Audience member: I'm just wondering if it's a handicap.

Alexa: Well, maybe it is.

Mary: Do you have any Japanese classes in your school?

Alexa: Yes, there are classes but I can only take one language and I'm taking French so I'm not able to take any Japanese.

Tom: Excuse me. I should take my answers back as I don't write any more. I use the computer a lot. I use a word processor so I don't really write these days. So I can't really say.

Mary: But then you're able to do the *tenkan* [changing phonetic writing into *kanji*] and so on.

Tom: Yes. So that's the reading aspect.

Mary: Aya, are you keeping up with your writing in Japanese?

Aya: I think I have enough Japanese. I have to study how to write *kanji* because I have to pass Japanese tests at school.

Audience member: I'm interested in what factors drove you to become active bilinguals, as opposed to passive or receptive bilinguals. Marc you mentioned your brother doesn't speak French and Tom you mentioned you didn't become active until later, so I think you all would have some nice comments, but I'd like to ask Aya first. You must have understood quickly that your father could understand Japanese and even if he insisted on speaking to you in English, didn't you want to just make things easy and respond in Japanese?

Aya: I wrote a speech about that. They didn't force me to speak English. I chose it because I wanted to speak English. I knew that I could speak with a lot more people. So I didn't even think hard that I didn't want to speak English.

Audience member: Marc, what was the difference between you and your brother?

Marc: I'm interested in languages. I like sound, I'm musical and I like to pick up sounds that I hear. I stayed in North Africa for a year and I would just try to mimic the Arab people. I can't speak Arabic but I can make really good Arabic sounds. I just like to play with language and I'm naturally musical. I don't feel that people should learn a language; for me, it's just I'm naturally interested in it.

Audience member: This is a question for everyone. What languages did your parents speak to each other and did that make a difference to what languages you learned?

Marc: When we were in France, they spoke to each other in French and when we were in England they spoke to each other in English. They were both bilingual. I think the received wisdom is that one parent should speak to you in one language and the other parent should speak to you in the other language. They didn't do that.

Aya: I've heard my parents talking Japanese but they are using English when we're talking together.

Mary: When you come home from school, do you talk to your mother in Japanese?

Aya: Yeah, but my Dad lives in a different place and when he comes back to my house we speak in English.

Carla: I think pretty much it's all in Spanish. My father knew Spanish before he met Mom.

Mary: And the Italian was from your father?

Carla: Yes. My mother can get along in Italian but she never used it.

Audience member: Did your father always or usually use Italian?

Carla: Only from time to time. Sometimes, we were driving and he would just say "OK. We'll try Italian." And he would speak to me in Italian and I would understand it but I wouldn't respond in Italian. I knew it was similar to Spanish but different and I didn't know how to work it. My interest in Italian didn't come until I actually went to Italy.

Mary: How about you, Alexa?

Alexa: I spoke French to my mother and English to my father but I can speak English to my mother and French to my father. I'm just not used to that.

Mary: What do they use with each other?

Alexa: Well, sometimes they speak French and sometimes they speak English. It depends. When we have something to say very quickly and we can say it more quickly in English, then we say it in English. But we usually don't mix words, like "I was walking au magasin" or something like that. It doesn't work that way. And I don't like that. I think that's one of the weak points of a bilingual sometimes, because they have a tendency to mix words. I don't think that's very good, because it narrows the vocabulary and things like that.

Mary: Do you ever use Japanese in a family conversation?

Alexa: Sometimes, when we joke. Usually I don't use Japanese with my parents. I speak Japanese with my friends or at school.

Mary: With your sister, do you ever speak Japanese?

Alexa: When I joke with her.

Audience member: Do you speak primarily French or English to each other?

Alexa: Generally, we speak both. Oh, my father's shaking his head.

Mary: Do you want to explain? What do you do?

Alexa's father: Actually, I don't know. I was thinking. What do we speak? I don't know.

Alexa's mother: It depends what is handy. If it's easier to say it in English, we say it in English. It's just a question of using the language that is the easiest to use at that time.

Mary: So neither one of you is conscious . .

Alexa's parents: No. Not at all.

Mary: Tom, what about in your family? What happened?

Tom: Well, my father's Japanese is perfect. Actually, in my life I've heard his Japanese only a few times. It's really strange when I hear him speaking to somebody else in Japanese. He always spoke to me in English. So, inside the family, the parents were speaking constantly in English but the children would reply in Japanese. This often surprised my parents. My father would say something in English and I would say "*Hai, wakatta*."

Mary: And how about in your family now? What do you do with your daughter now?

Tom: Well, before she started going to school, I tried my best to speak in English. My wife would speak Japanese. After she started going to international school, now my concerns have turned around and I need to worry about her Japanese also. I haven't made a decision yet. It's really mixed: sometimes in Japanese, sometimes in English on any one topic.

Audience member: Alexa mentioned that when she speaks different languages she has different personalities. Do all of you do that? Plus: if you do, were there any times when you were growing up that your siblings said "Look at her. She's speaking English and she's acting weird"? You know, a change of personality.

Mary: How about you, Tom? Did you feel like you were different in English than in Japanese?

Tom: Yeah. I feel more open and expressive speaking in English. I'm actually a very shy person. I hate talking. And it's worse in Japanese. In English, it's easier to just speak out.

Mary: And did your sister razz you about the way you are in English and the way you are in Japanese?

Tom: My sister is a passive bilingual. So, she cannot speak English at all.

Mary: How about you, Carla? Do you feel like a different person in different languages?

Carla: I don't think so. It's a hard question. I've never noticed. I know that . . .

Audience member: If your siblings are the same, reacting differently in different languages, maybe they don't notice it.

Carla: Yes, but I've noticed it about my brother.

Audience member: Did you feel strange?

Carla: I did. He went on a three-month boat-trip with a lot of other Latins. He came back and, like, the way he spoke Spanish, like, what is wrong with him? He became like that culture, very loud and more aggressive than he normally is, because I think that was just the people he was hanging out with. And then, slowly, he went back to his normal self. I think that if I do change personalities, it's because I'm spending time in that culture so I kind of adapt myself a little bit more towards that style.

Audience member: But no-one's ever noticed your change?

Carla: I don't think so. Not that I'm aware of.

Audience member: You'd better ask your brother.

Mary: Aya, do you feel different when you speak in English than when you speak in Japanese?

Aya: I don't feel anything. But I think I'm comfortable speaking Japanese more because I learnt it more.

Mary: Marc, what about you?

Marc: There probably is a slight difference but I don't feel I'm taking on a different personality.

Audience member: You've never heard one of your siblings remark about it?

Marc: No.

Audience member: I want to ask Alexa about what happened when you changed school systems, because I know that academic language skills are not the same as speaking skills and it's very difficult to transfer. And do you think it would have been better to do elementary school in English and then change to Japanese school?

Alexa: Well, I think it would have been very hard to do, because I was born in Japan so I was in this Japanese setting. So, if I spoke English first, and no Japanese, since my parents are not Japanese, then I don't think I could go into a Japanese school like that, at age 12. But, anyway, when I changed from Japanese school to American school, it was more of a cultural change, because I wasn't used to seeing other *gaijin*. And so, I went to Osaka International School and a friend would come up and say "Oh, Alexa, how are you doing?" And I'd think, "She speaks so much." I wasn't used to foreigners at all.

Audience member: Linguistically, how did you cope?

Alexa: Well, my father read to me in English a lot and I read in English before going to the school. Of course it was a big change and it forced me into an English environment. Of course, it was hard but it wasn't as hard as, maybe, most people think.

Audience member: I have several friends whom I always thought were very close to being bilingual, adult friends, English-Japanese bilinguals, but in neither language did I feel like they were fully fluent as an adult in a business environment. Do any of you feel that, when you're in a business situation or an adult gathering, that your language may not be up to par with someone who grew up as a native speaker in that single language?

Tom: My Japanese is my first language. I have a lot of trouble expressing myself in English. I think I'm nowhere near everyone else's level. I have a lot of, not problems, but I can't squeeze out the words I want to.

Audience member: Do you have any problems in your first language as well?

Tom: In Japanese, I don't have any problems.

Mary: How about you, Alexa? Are you comfortable in all your languages or do you feel that somehow . . . ?

Alexa: I don't know about other people but I feel more comfortable with adults, because when I'm with my peers, they seem to use a lot of slang and sometimes I don't know some of their words and I'm ashamed to ask "Oh, what does that mean?" So, sometimes there's that problem. I'm more used to what my parents say at home. Of course, they have more advanced, adult speech. So, I feel more comfortable with adults, I think. It may sound strange.

Mary: Carla, how about you?

Carla: I do admit my Spanish and Italian are weaker. Right now, they're going down because I don't use them as often as I should do. But when I was in college and doing Italian, I was perfectly able to write three or four papers and not have to put too much effort into it. So, I'd have to get back into the swing of things. But they are weaker and I don't normally do business with them.

Marc: Like Carla, my French is weaker. I don't feel I'm 100% bilingual but I do feel that if I went back to France, my French would get better very quickly and in six months to a year, I would be completely comfortable in it. So it's just a matter of how much I use it. I mean, in Japan I don't use it very much.

Audience member: Some people were touching on this but I don't think it's a repeat. I want to get into the idea of identity. A couple of people have mentioned when they were smaller they kind of had an identity crisis and they didn't know which they were. I was wondering about that, if that was a significant time in your lives, when you had an identity crisis and how long did it last? And has it carried on?

Mary: Starting with you again then, Marc.

Marc: I haven't had an identity crisis. I'm quite comfortable with both languages.

Audience member: I was thinking personally, or culturally, not so much the language you feel comfortable in so much as "Who are you and where do you belong?"

Audience member: I'm going to have to interrupt you. This is a language conference not psychology.

Marc: I think the two are very, very closely connected.

Mary: Yes, they are and I think that was part of the idea of the session.

Marc: I didn't experience anything like that.

Mary: Aya, did you ever feel that you have trouble knowing who you are, that you're maybe not Japanese.

Aya: No.

Mary: How about you, Carla?

Carla: I don't remember ever having any identity crisis. I always thought: I'm Carla. My Mom speaks Spanish because she's from Bolivia. There has always been a very simple explanation for who I was.

Mary: Alexa, how about you? Was there ever a time when it was very difficult to figure out who you are?

Alexa: Of course. I think that's natural. Sometimes a French person will call my mother and I will answer the phone. And she'll say "Oh, is this Françoise?" And I say, "No. This is Alexa." "Oh, can I speak to your mother?" And I think "I'm French." And it happens like that in English, too. And sometimes in Japanese school, because I don't look Japanese, my friends would say, "Well since you're a *gaijin*, blah, blah, blah" and I sometimes want to say "Look. I'm like you. And, even though I don't look Japanese, in a way I am Japanese" but they've never really understood that point and so it's kind of sad.

Mary: Tom, you mentioned having some trouble.

Tom: Yeah. It wasn't the language aspect. It was the people around me. When I got into an argument with friends, the final comment would be "*Yappari, omae wa gaijin*" [Of course, you're not Japanese]. So I would like to say the opposite, "*Omae wa nihonjin dakara wakaranai*" [You're Japanese so you don't understand] but, you know, you couldn't say that at school.

Alexa: It's frustrating.

Tom: It is. There was an interesting thing that happened when I was 15. I went to the States for a month and came back and all of a sudden I started rejecting everything Japanese. I still don't know why that happened. That's when I clicked and thought "I have to intentionally start using my English or I'm never going to be able to speak."

Audience member: I was just wondering if there is one language that is more dominant, that you really study more in, read more in, write more in, that is your fluent language. For example, Alexa, you speak Japanese and French and English, right? But, now, you probably don't use your

Japanese as much any more because you've changed schools, right? So, what is the language that you use, not just to talk to your parents, but the language of study, of reading, of writing, a little bit of what you were touching on? Because, I grew up bilingual, too: I only spoke German at home but I've always considered myself American and I studied English and that was the language that I chose to be as proficient in as possible. I'm not as fluent in German as I am in English. So, I'm wondering: do you have a dominant language?

Audience member: Can I also ask you: What language do you solve problems in?

Mary: We may get very different answers from different people. How about you Alexa?

Alexa: Coming back to my story about my identity. I used to be in Japanese school. So, that was when my Japanese was the strongest. My French and my English weren't that strong and so Japanese really dominated me. So, at that time, I was Japanese. But now, I'm at Osaka International School, so I became American. I think in future I'll be in France, that means in the university, and so then I'll be French. I try to plan everything but I'm still 16 so don't want to take any big decisions.

Mary: Tom, what about you? Would you say that your Japanese is dominant?

Tom: Well, like you said, my Japanese is strong. I have many weaknesses in English. I teach English. I feel bad about that. Almost all the reading I do recently is in English. I'm trying to get better but I don't think I can get through a Master's course because I went to a Japanese college as a Japanese student so my academic skills are more in Japanese than in English.

Mary: Carla?

Carla: Most of the time, English is my strongest language. I use it for reading, letters and FAXes but I feel that I could do things in the other languages, with practice. In college, I took the highest level Spanish course, just to see. I was very nervous because I'd never officially studied Spanish. And I did fine. At first, it was difficult but I could do it. I do make mistakes in Spanish. I've asked people, they say I don't have an accent but they can tell that I'm not a native.

Mary: I assume, Aya, that your Japanese is very, very good. Do you read things in English? Are you comfortable with it? You seem very comfortable in English, most of the time.

Aya: I think I should try to read more English books because last year when I went to America I couldn't really talk well with teenage girls, because I couldn't understand slang or what is going on there at my age. Like, I was playing with a nine-year old girl instead of playing with her 13 year old sister. So, I felt I was very small. I need to brush up some English, like maybe English reading and things.

Mary: Marc.

Marc: Well, needless to say, I'm clearly more comfortable in English. But this is quite an interesting question because I'm worried that people who don't have a clearly dominant language might have an identity problem. It's something I'm concerned about with my daughter. I feel for her: although she was born in Japan and she's spent all her life here and Japanese is her dominant language, she has a British passport and British nationality only.. It's something I'm concerned about. I'm anxious to see what happens.

Audience member: I have a child who's bilingual but I realise that it's been arbitrary on my part to emphasise bilingualism so much. I wonder if we can ask each of the people if they have an interest, that's clearly unrelated to language, they identify with very strongly or whether the linguistic side of things - bilingualism, trilingualism - has kind of taken over. My son likes math and science and I feel like, you know, as a parent, letting him explore that, even if it overshadows his bilingualism, should be an option for him. Have the people on the panel found that some other aspect of their character is equally, if not more, important to them as their linguistic aspect?

Carla: Other interests? Yes. I've always been very interested in books. And I was going to be a ballerina; that was my dream. My brother, well he loves his Spanish and he's learning business, so hopefully he'll use his Spanish to help him in the business world.

Mary: Aya, I'm going to try to make this question easier for you to understand. Is there something else, besides English, that you're interested in, that you want to do but you can't do because your father makes you speak English? Like maybe you'd really like to swim or play the piano but you can't because you have to learn English.

Aya: Not really, no.

Mary: Alexa?

Alexa: I feel I can speak another language and that's my piano. Sometimes it's helped me. It's kind of stress-relieving. Other interests? I'm interested in a lot of things, almost everything. I'm very interested in history and ancient languages. For example, like I said, Ancient

Greek, Latin and Hebrew. I like economics and I think I'm good at math, too.

Audience member: Do you use *kuku* [the multiplication tables in Japanese] for math?

Alexa: Oh, of course. Sometimes the teacher says "OK, Alexa. What's 4 x 4?" And then I have to stop and put it into Japanese. "*Shi shi juuroku*." Then I have to change it into English again: "16." "It took you all this time? Poor thing!"

Marc: My Mum did the same. When she helped me with my French homework, she had to say it in French. She couldn't do it otherwise.

Mary: Tom, would you like to answer that question as well? Was there anything you feel that language was keeping you from doing?

Tom: Truly, my parents never forced me. They constantly spoke to me in English but I never had to sacrifice anything else to study language. In school, each time we'd move, I'd have a hard time catching up with the other students.

Audience member: You are all obviously successful bilinguals but are you aware of any people whose bilingual up-bringing was not successful?

Marc: I don't know anyone like that. And I don't really think there's such a thing as a successful bilingual. I certainly am not.

Carla: I just met a girl. Her parents are Japanese and the mother had lived in the States for university: her English is excellent. They had tried to raise their two daughters bilingually but they'd had problems and now they've found out their younger daughter is a slow learner. So her mother blames herself, saying that she tried to teach them two languages and really messed up her daughter. I'm really against that because I don't think it was the two languages at all. I think it was a different factor that was the problem.

I don't really know any except that one case and there I think it's a personality thing. It's not the two languages that cause the problem; it's another factor.

Alexa: I don't really know anyone like that. I guess there are such people but I never met them.

Tom: Like Marc said, I don't think there's any such thing as a successful bilingual. I don't consider myself to be a successful bilingual.

I guess the only problem would be with people like my sister. She was born in a family like ours so other people expect her to be able to speak English but she can't. Maybe she may have some bad feeling there.

Marc: Can I just add something? I've heard it said that children get confused. I firmly believe that kids don't get confused. There's no confusion with words. A kid quite understands that it's a code and there's no confusion. The confusion may arise if you punish a kid for using the wrong codes. That leads to confusion but I don't think kids get confused about which is which. The child will know that it can make itself understood with this person in this language and if you can't then try another one.

Audience member: This may be a kind of answer to the previous question.

We know two families: one is a French and Japanese family living in Kagoshima. They have two children. The first girl's a successful bilingual and the boy, the second-born child, is autistic. The psychologist's diagnosis was: cause of autism - bilingualism.

The second case is a French-Hungarian couple living in France. They have three children: the two girls are successful bilinguals. The boy, the third-born, is also successful but he has a slight pronunciation problem in both languages. And also, the speech therapist's diagnosis was: cause of the problem - bilingualism.

So it looks like: when a monolingual child has a problem, it's a problem; if it's a bilingual child, then call it bilingualism. In both cases the parents don't believe it

Mary: I'm afraid we've run out of time. I'd like to thank all the panellists and the members of the audience for their participation in this most interesting discussion.

I think Tom has some final words.

Tom: I am sure there are many varieties of ways and circumstances children grow up in and there is no such thing as a formula for a child to be brought up successfully as a bilingual, but one important point, I believe, is for parents to try to understand the pains and frustrations their children must go through and also to give the children an opportunity to know how fruitful it is to be able to understand two or more languages and cultures.

Alexa: Yes. Growing up bilingually or trilingually is a wonderful experience, but also a very challenging one. I would definitely encourage parents to bring up their children bilingually if the possibility exists.

Roundtable participants (from left to right): Tom Merner, Alexa Ratzlaff, Mary Goebel Noguchi (Chair), Carla Fantini, Aya Watanabe and Marc Sheffner.