

In this issue we are considering ESL and mother tongue – one of the major concerns facing non-Anglophone families and sending agencies. Traditionally the majority of these have been in Continental Europe and Scandinavia, but more and more families are coming from Asian, Latin American and sub-Saharan African countries. This may appear to complicate things for sending agencies, families and MK schools alike, but the good news is that positive steps in the right direction can benefit everyone as so many of the concerns – like ESL and mother tongue – are shared. The final responsibility to ensure that all children learn their mother tongue rests with the parents, but Carola Keil's article below outlines real ways in which MK schools and sending agencies can, and should, help. There is also a brief summary of the developing work of EIMESC after Carola's article. Carola is a member of EIMESC and contributed this article based on a presentation at the international, inter-mission MK education event in September 2007 at the Wycliffe Centre in the UK.

For your reference some of the common acronyms and terms are explained here

(T)ESL = (Teaching) English as a Second Language

(T)EFL = (Teaching) English as a Foreign Language

(T)EAL = (Teaching) English as an Additional Language

(T)ESOL = (Teaching) English for Speakers of Other Languages

ELL = English Language Learner

MT = Mother Tongue (sometimes called First language, as the "mother tongue" definition can be difficult to pin down in cross-cultural marriages)

Anglophone = Mother tongue English speaker

It is worth noting that the first 4 terms are often used interchangeably, although there are some differences. ESL tends to be favoured in N. America and EFL in the UK.

## **ESL & Mother Tongue Carola Keil**

I would like to take you on an imaginary journey. It is the year 2017. You are a parent in a family with 3 young children (ages 9, 6, and 4), preparing to go to a certain country. At the MK school your children will be attending the language of instruction (and the teachers) will be Korean.

- What concerns do you have?
- What would you ask the school to do?

This is the reality of MK schools, and many home education programmes, for most non-Anglophone families working in mission. They must face a series of extra challenges compared to their First Language English speaking classmates.

### **What challenges arise for the students?**

#### **Mother tongue**

Did you know that 21 February is the International Mother Language Day? (Proclaimed in 1999 by UNESCO) Our world is getting more and more international, but *Mother tongue education and multilingualism are increasingly accepted around the world and speaking one's own language is more and more a right.* (UNESCO Education Today newsletter, July - September, 2003- The mother-tongue dilemma.)

#### **Why is the mother tongue (MT) important for TCKs?**

If they grow up outside the parents' home country, and are educated at an International school, why not raise TCKs to be "global world citizens" (rather than "Germans")? Then the mother tongue is not so important, is it? But what about the following issues?

#### **1. Identity – know where you belong**

Language is a vital part of Culture, and Culture is a very important part of a person's identity. Children need to learn the "rules" of their culture and the language. In our mother tongue we can best express

feelings and emotions. It is the parent's responsibility to help a child to preserve a national identity, language and culture. This gives him a feeling of personal worth and self esteem.

*The Mother tongue is the foundation of building a person's identity. (UNESCO)*

## **2. Re-entry**

For many TCKs who come to their country of citizenship to stay either after graduation or during their school years, their passport country is not really "home", they are "secret immigrants". But most children don't want to stand out, they try hard to be like everyone else, especially at school, and they need to be fluent in their mother tongue at least. They have enough other transition stress to cope with (they still have to "learn" the "youth language", clothes, behaviour, etc.) The second language, English, suddenly loses its significance.

## **3. Further studies in home country**

Children might be fluent in their mother tongue in a social context (family, friends etc.) but not have the vocabulary to acquire academic knowledge if they have not had formal teaching at their age level.

**One goal in TCK education should be to facilitate our children's transition into the educational institutions of their country of citizenship.**

## **4. Studies in second language (at an International school)**

Research shows that literacy in the mother tongue has a "cross-over" effect in improving literacy in English. And not keeping up literacy in your mother tongue may lead to slower progress in English, and poorer results. A friend of mine is a teacher in Germany, with a high number of Turkish immigrant children in her class. She was surprised that none of them did well at school, so she had them tested by a Turkish teacher, who found out that they hardly spoke any Turkish, just the basics for everyday life.

## **What challenges arise for International MK schools and their teachers?**

The numbers of ESL Students are growing in MK schools around the world.

Murree Christian School in Pakistan (MCS), which started out as an American school, presently has 68 % ESL students (52 % last year), a growing number of them from non-western countries. (17 % Korean, 15 % US)

While this is a positive development from one perspective, teachers might face the challenge of teaching a class where a number of students have a limited understanding of English and the school might fear a lower academic standard.

What can the school do?

**Either** implement admission tests and turn down students with little English (which might not be in line with your goal to serve the whole mission community)

**Or** implement, develop and improve an ESL and MT programme

## **Why ESL and Mother Tongue?**

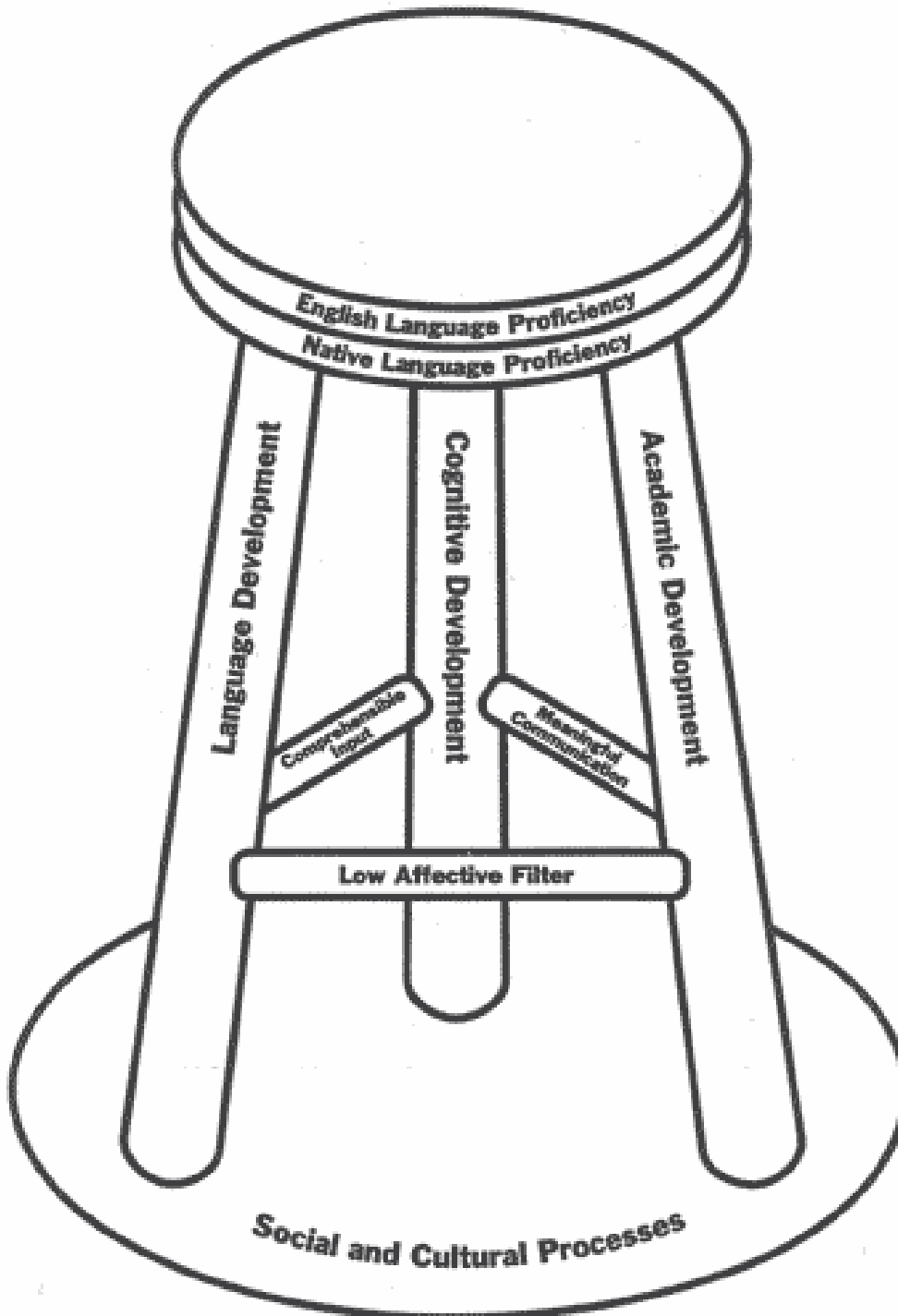
### **Vienna International School, who are at the forefront of ESL & MT teaching:**

*"In order to assure that students will enjoy cognitive and academic success in their second language, English, a student's first language system, oral and written, must be developed to a high cognitive level." (ESL & MT department at Vienna International School <http://school.vis.ac.at/esl>)*

***Students ... should be able to achieve all the benefits of additive bilingualism - acquiring a second language with no detriment to development in their first language. This can only be achieved if students maintain and develop their mother tongue in speaking, listening, reading and writing. (The International School of Amsterdam <http://www.isa.nl>)***

The **diagram** below shows in schematic form the **aspects of language proficiency**:

# Aspects of Language Proficiency



Danette Erickson Meyer, Illinois Resource Center, 1855 Mt. Prospect Rd., Des Plaines, IL 60018

<http://school.vis.ac.at/es/> courtesy of Else Hamayan

The model of the language acquisition process is based on the **social and cultural processes** occurring through everyday life in all contexts – home, school, community and the broader society, and how these feed into the student's language

Based on this are the "legs" that are important for language proficiency:

**Language development**, the acquisition of the oral and written systems of the student's first and second languages in all the language domains: grammar, vocabulary, phonology, semantics, etc.  
**Cognitive development** (development of conceptual and analytic thought)

**Academic development.** This includes all school work in the various subjects. With each succeeding grade, academic work dramatically expands the vocabulary and language patterns to higher cognitive levels. This knowledge transfers from the first language to the second language  
They are interrelated:

**Comprehensible input:** (without language thinking is impossible)

**Meaningful communication:** academic knowledge must be processed in thinking, cognitive abilities must be developed

**Low affective filter:** (affective filter: learning blockage due to a negative attitude such as anxiety, fear, frustration, low self esteem) e. g.: When we came to Germany, our daughter Tamara (Gr. 6) had the biggest problems with Maths. She did not know the German terminology, the academic maths language. She felt frustrated, fearful etc. This high affective filter blocked her from understanding and learning new maths concepts. So she failed her first test and thought: "I'm bad at Maths." But it was more of a language problem.

The same happens with ESL children at International schools: They sit in science class, and if they do not know the vocabulary, they will feel just feel frustrated and not even take an effort to actively take part. So this affective filter has to be lowered for a child to develop academically. So all of these aspects are interrelated and promote one another and are the foundation for language proficiency, native and English. This is why we need ESL teachers at International schools: the ESL and the content area teacher **MUST COOPERATE** as **BOTH** plan their daily lessons. The content area teacher must inform the ESL teacher about the vocabulary that will be used during the content area lesson. With this vocabulary information, the ESL teacher can plan a lesson that provides opportunities for English Language Learners (ELL's) to listen, understand, speak, practice, read and master the new words **BEFORE** they attend the content area lesson. If English Language Learners are **PREPARED** during the ESL lessons, then the ELL's **WILL ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE** in the content area lessons because now he has the academic language to do so.

Students studying at International schools need to read and learn in their MT as well. At MCS the teacher used ordinary German schoolbooks from the respective grade levels in her German classes, and had elements of science, maths in her lessons, esp. before children returned to their home countries. "Culture" was covered in afternoon fun activities: She offered "German Club" (once a week, alternate elementary and high school) as an afternoon fun activity: Singing, stories, cooking, movies, discussions, games, youth culture, and German holidays.

### **What are the benefits of an ESL and MT programme for the school?**

- Enriching cultural and linguistic diversity
- Higher academic level of all students
- The school can offer a wider variety of second languages. Most mother tongue teachers will be willing to teach their language as second or third language to English MT students. Bilingual students - and adults - who have achieved high-level and well balanced skills in two (or more) languages, are recognised to be more effective thinkers and problem solvers than monolinguals. MT teachers can also be very supportive as bilingual specialists interacting with the ESL Teacher.
- Be in line with other international schools and requirements around the world. In 2001 the ESL committee of the **European Council of International Schools (ECIS)** officially changed their name to **ESL and Mother Tongue Committee** to incorporate mother tongue learning as part of their mandate. From their August 2001 newsletter: *ECIS is not the only organisation that has acknowledged the importance of mother tongue development for children in international schools. The IB has now made provision for the mother tongue a requirement for the Middle Years Programme to be authorised.*  
[http://www.ecis.org/committees/newsletters/aug\\_01/ESL%20Mother%20Tongue%20Committee.pdf](http://www.ecis.org/committees/newsletters/aug_01/ESL%20Mother%20Tongue%20Committee.pdf)

**Maurice Carder** says in his book: *Bilingualism in International schools*, (see resources) that "the second language program should be at the centre of an international school curriculum not on the

*periphery; all staff should be aware of the issues involved...in this way an International School will be truly international and can avoid being seen as an English speaking school with an exotic influx of non-English speakers.”*

### **Recommendations – Schools:**

- Increase awareness more generally in schools of the need for specialist personnel, training, programs and materials to support ESL learners
- Implement, develop and improve an English Second Language and Mother Tongue programme (*Example: ESL & MT department at Vienna International School* <http://school.vis.ac.at/esl>)
- Include ESL and Mother Tongue study in the school & homework timetable.
- Raise awareness of the great importance and the benefits of mother tongue maintenance in teachers, school staff, parents, students
- Encourage families to take steps themselves to keep the mother tongue and their home culture alive and well
- Teach families how to prepare their children for an English medium school
- Insist on TCK pre-field orientation for all school staff with an emphasis on international education, including teaching on ESL students, possibly in an international context
- Aim to recruit MT teachers for MT lessons, cultural activities and as bilingual support staff. If no teachers are available then time to study in the mother tongue using a correspondence or online course should be allocated.
- Take advantage of special courses for all school staff as part of Pre-Field Orientation (PFO) or continuing professional teacher development e. g. by ECIS, or Unlocking the World, see resources section

### **Recommendations – Sending Organisations:**

- Before their first assignment, and on furloughs, give educational advice to families on a proactive basis. Educate ESL parents on the importance of the mother tongue and how to keep it up in an international context.
- Teach ESL families how to prepare their children for an English medium school and on the advantages of additive bilingualism
- Find MT teachers
- All MK school personnel need TCK PFO and continuing professional teacher development training that includes teaching on bilingualism and mother tongue. (See resources section) Those preparing in the USA should receive some input from non-Anglophones from Europe, Asia, Latin America and/or Africa.

### **Resources:**

The book *Bilingualism in International Schools: A Model for Enriching Language Education* by Maurice Carder is published by Multilingual Matters in 2007. “A very informative read for ESL teachers, all school staff, parents and administrators.” At <http://www.multilingual-matters.com> you find a table of content, and various other interesting books on the subject.

A great **website** with current news and views on ESL/Bilingual education and lots of updates about what is happening in second language education around the world is <http://sd.krashen.com>

The website of the **ESL & MT department of Vienna International School** <http://school.vis.ac.at/esl> has good general information as well as interesting pages for parents and teachers

### **Professional Teacher development:**

**The ESL & MT conference in Geneva: Promoting Multilingual Student Identities Across the International School Curricula.** This Forum is aimed at all international school teachers, as well as all teachers of second language learners. We also warmly invite school administrators and officials to join us. The Conference will be held in Geneva on February 28-29 and March 1, 2008.

[www.forumgeneva.info/](http://www.forumgeneva.info/)

**The European Council of International Schools (ECIS)** <http://www.ecis.org> is a collaborative network promoting the ideals and best practice of international education.

- acts as a catalyst for the advancement of internationalism through education
- provides and facilitates opportunities for professional development to enhance the effectiveness of international educators
- Their publications *Shortcuts* is a free email newsletter providing information and links on current education issues and is available to teachers and administrators in international schools. <http://www.international-ed.com/freepublications.htm>
- The **ESL and Mother Tongue Committee** of ECIS publish a newsletter: <http://www.ecis.org/Committees/newsletters/ESL%20MT%20newsletter%20march07.pdf>

By the Government of Australia: ***Unlocking the World*** is a series of professional development programs for classroom teachers. Tutors come to host schools around the world and train the teachers. <http://www.unlockingtheworld.com>

e.g. **ESL in the mainstream: understanding and meeting ESL students' needs** *is a professional development program which has proved outstandingly successful in enhancing the qualifications and classroom practice of teachers working with students from non-English speaking backgrounds for whom English is a second language (ESL). This includes students of all ages from a vast range of language and cultural backgrounds.*

*ESL in the mainstream* comprises two interlinked components:

- Tutor training
- Teacher development course.

For more information and an outline of the course look at their brochure:

[http://www.bcis.ac.th/images/download/ESL\\_Mainstream\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.bcis.ac.th/images/download/ESL_Mainstream_Brochure.pdf)

**Carola Keil, Germany.** During my training as a kindergarten teacher I specialized in language development. In 1992 I moved to Pakistan with my family (Three children aged 5, 3, and 3 months) where I home schooled my children (in English and German) initially. From 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> class they attended Murree Christian School where I served on the Board of Directors for eight years. In 2002 I trained as a TEFL teacher. Since our return to Germany in 2003 I work with MK care Germany supporting and advising parents on educational issues.

## **EIMESC – European Inter-Mission Education Standing Council**

EIMESC was formed as a result of a consensus decision during the discussions on Europeans in international education at Eurotck in Germany during March 2007. The group represents mission agencies and families from across Europe with members from several different countries and agencies. The goal is to produce advice and resources to help 3 groups of people do the job of educating European MKs. Those 3 groups and the recommended measures to be taken are

1. **Parents** – the final responsibility for ensuring that the mother tongue and cultural understanding of the passport country are taught rests with the parents. In some cases the parents are the only ones who know what the passport country culture is like – this is particularly the case from smaller, minority sending countries. No-one else can fill this role.

2. **The sending agency** – in order for parents to achieve the goal of teaching the mother tongue the organisations sending families cross-culturally need to adequately support them. This support will be in ensuring that long-term educational plans are made, that parents understand how to teach their children mother tongue, or first language, skills, and in making known what correspondence and other resources are available to do this. EIMESC aims to help organisations deliver the best possible support to their families. Practical advice in teaching and maintaining the passport culture should also be given, along with how to balance this against the needs to learn the host culture to integrate, and an international culture for the mission team and the international school – if this education option is used. Sending organisations should also provide and train teachers and administrators sent to the international schools they sponsor. This needs dedicated advance and ongoing training about third culture kids, international education and working in an international team, as well as any other general, but relevant cross-cultural preparation. Since most of the teachers in such schools come from North America, EIMESC is producing teaching resources about European education and European children to help them prepare and work there.
3. **The International & MK schools** – there are a number of straightforward, common sense measures that can be taken there to help European (and Asian, Latin American & sub-Saharan African) students for the longer term. Carola has already outlined those relating to ESL & MT issues in her article\* above.
- The other concerns that EIMESC would like to see addressed are
- End standards on graduation for successful academic re-entry. This means either adopting an international programme such as the Cambridge IGCSE and AICE, or the International Baccalaureate, or using the US-based SAT Subject tests (formerly SATII) and Advanced Placements. These end standard concerns are shared in many Commonwealth countries which have similar higher education entry requirements.
  - Cultural understanding; European children can easily feel in a double minority as foreigners in the host country and foreigners in the school culture. EIMESC promotes small and achievable measures that enhance cultural understanding of European families such as the recognition of relevant national days, teachers knowing about and timetabling appropriate learning opportunities to study the children's passport countries.
  - Costs; many schools have high very high fees. We would encourage the establishment of scholarship funds to take on board low-income families. This issue will concern any schools receiving children from newer sending countries.

EIMESC shares many of these concerns with African, Asian, Commonwealth and Latin American sending countries, and seeks to work in co-operation with similar groups there.

\*Almost all MK schools have taken on board the need to teach EFL as a matter of necessity, but there are still a good number who need to recognise the importance of the MT. Where schools have done so there has been a very warm welcome from parents for its inclusion in the curriculum and planning. Some children may be less enthusiastic, but usually come to see its value later on. Follow the reference here for an account of this from Alliance Academy in Quito published in the World Report of Spring 2000 <http://www.acsi.org/~wr>

**Educare** is a ministry of WEC International.