

## Re: Bilingualism in 'migrant' children

**Source:** <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2005-01/0687.html>

---

**From:** Lee Sau Dan ([danlee\\_at\\_informatik.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:danlee_at_informatik.uni-freiburg.de))

**Date:** 01/05/05

Date: 05 Jan 2005 23:26:18 +0800

>>>> "mb" == mb <[azythos2@hotmail.com](mailto:azythos2@hotmail.com)> writes:

mb> Jarosciak is also right in that highly educated, privileged  
mb> groups, not only among the host country aristocracy but also  
mb> educated migrants, have totally different value judgments  
mb> here. They are also much more aware of the dangers of mixing  
mb> languages with children and are more likely to stick to the  
mb> principle of having each reference adult use his own mother  
mb> tongue, in order to encourage competent multilingualism in the  
mb> child. And, of course, educated migrants are much more likely  
mb> to provide education in the written / standard imported  
mb> language.

In some families with well educated parents in Hong Kong, the situation is quite opposite. Although the parents are both native Cantonese speakers and both grew up in HK, they speak English at home. Their rationale: have the children exposed to English -- the "prestigious" language -- as early and as frequently as possible, so that their children can speak English well. But these parents do not do it well. They don't speak English that well, and they do have an accent. So, how can the children pick up good English pronunciations? Worse still, being not native speakers, these parents often lack expressions that they want. So, they occasionally switch back to Cantonese to say certain things for convenience. Even worse, many of them often uses a mix of languages. A family conversation can switch between English and Cantonese without any predictable patterns. Result? The children suffer. They can't speak either language competently.

--

Lee Sau Dan

§ö|u´°

~{@nJX6X~}

E-mail: [danlee@informatik.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:danlee@informatik.uni-freiburg.de)

Home page: <http://www.informatik.uni-freiburg.de/~danlee>