



This is France — Raising Children: a few specificities

This is a subject about which, we, the four editors of *French Accent Magazine*, can speak from experience: that of children adapting to living in a country with a different language and culture. Roger Stevenson's two sons, born in the US, were 11 and 7 years old when the family moved to France. He remembers how quickly they began to fit in with French children, playing football (soccer) with them on the grass in front of their apartment building, and how fast they learned the language. Vincent Anthonioz was very young when he started to love travelling. When he arrived in London, he spoke very little English. In just a few months he learned on the spot, and was soon bilingual. His wife Céline was 12 when she arrived in New Jersey with her parents. She had just started English lessons in France and

found herself in an American public school, far from big cities, where no one spoke a single word of French. She said it was very hard the first few weeks, but in three months she was totally bilingual (and spoke English with a real American accent that she still has today) and at the end of the school year she was among the best of her class.

We can, therefore, reassure all parents who hesitate to move to France with their families: children adapt very quickly (up to the age of 12-13), and much more easily than adults, to the language and the culture of another country. But for them, surprisingly, and contrary to what happens for adults, it is not always the language that is the most difficult. Kids understand each other very quickly, and they have other means of communication, such as games, and, of

Elever des enfants en France: quelques particularités

Voilà un sujet sur lequel nous tous, les quatre rédacteurs de *French Accent Magazine*, pouvons tous parler d'expérience : celui de l'intégration des enfants dans un pays de langue et de culture différente. Les deux fils de Roger Stevenson, nés aux Etats-Unis, avaient 11 et 7 ans lorsque la famille est venue habiter en France. Il se souvient de la rapidité avec laquelle ils se sont intégrés parmi les petits enfants français, jouant au foot avec eux dans l'espace vert autour de l'immeuble, et ont vite appris la langue. Vincent Anthonioz a pris très jeune le goût du voyage. Lorsqu'il est arrivé à Londres, il parlait très peu anglais. En quelques mois il a appris sur le tas, et était bilingue. Sa femme Céline avait 12 ans lorsqu'elle est arrivée au New Jersey avec ses parents. Elle avait à peine commencé les cours d'anglais en France qu'elle s'est retrouvée dans une

école publique américaine, loin des grandes villes, où personne ne parlait un mot de français. Cela a été très dur les premières semaines, mais en trois mois elle était totalement bilingue (et parlait anglais avec un vrai accent américain qu'elle a toujours aujourd'hui), et à la fin de l'année scolaire elle était parmi les meilleures de la classe.

Nous pouvons donc rassurer tous les parents qui hésitent à venir habiter en France avec leur petite famille : les enfants s'adaptent très vite (jusqu'à 12-13 ans), et bien plus facilement que les adultes, à la langue et à la culture d'un autre pays. Mais curieusement, pour eux, contrairement à ce qui se passe pour pratiquement tous les adultes, ce n'est pas toujours la langue qui leur pose le plus de difficultés. Les enfants se comprennent très vite entre eux, ils ont d'autres moyens de com-

Children adapt very quickly, and much more easily than adults, to the language and the culture of another country. And contrary to what happens for adults, it is not always the language that is the most difficult.



Children (cont'd)

course, the younger they are, the faster they learn. But the most difficult thing is to adjust to the little, subtle cultural differences, linked for example to physical appearance, humour, behaviour, etc., all very important stuff for young children.

Cultural differences

This was the case for Céline, who remembers, as she ex-

books in their arms and held close to their chests and wearing make up (at the age of 12! ... Of course, they all made fun of her, at least that was the feeling she had, as she couldn't understand much of what they were saying. We had to rush out and buy new jeans and all the up-to-date equipment, get a different hair style, and then Céline started looking more like a little American girl.

Enfants (suite)

munication, ne serait-ce que le jeu, et bien sûr plus ils sont petits et plus ils apprennent vite. Mais le plus difficile est de se faire aux petites différences culturelles subtiles, liées par exemple à l'apparence physique, l'humour, les comportements, etc., qui ont pour les enfants une grande importance.

C'est ainsi que Céline se souvient, comme elle l'explique

trine... Evidemment elles se sont toutes moquées d'elle, du moins c'est l'impression qu'elle a ressenti car elle ne comprenait pas grand-chose à ce qu'elles disaient. Il a fallu vite aller acheter des jeans et tout l'équipement à la mode, changer de coiffure, et Céline a commencé à ressembler à une petite Américaine.

Dans ce dossier, concernant plus particulièrement les enfants de 6 à 12 ans (nous traite-

SAMPLE PAGE

To access to the rest of the article with
the audio and the full magazine,
SUBSCRIBE HERE

A few expressions used by French kids

A plus ! = See you later!

Bof, pas terrible = Well, it's not that great.

Ça va pas la tête ? = You must be kidding! (literally, Is your head all right?)

C'est trop top/trop bien/trop génial/trop cool/trop chouette ! = It is really good/great! Note: *trop* is very often used by kids, without any specific reason, to mean something really great.

C'est cool = This is nice, cool.

C'est fun = This is fun.

C'est la galère = to be in a difficult situation.

C'est méga top ! = It is wonderful!

Tu me casses les oreilles ! = You're giving me a headache!

Je te cause plus = I'm not going to talk to you anymore.

Je m'en fiche = I don't care, don't give a damn.

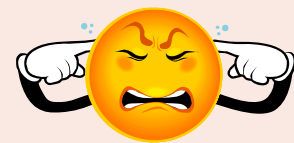
T'es grave toi = You're stupid, or useless.

T'inquiète ! = Don't worry!

T'es nul ! = You're useless.

T'es ouf ou quoi ?/T'es malade ou quoi ? = Are you crazy or what ? Note: *ouf* is the *verlan** form of *fou* (crazy). *Malade* (sick) is sometimes used to express the same thing.

Yes (pronounced yesssss) = Great!



Tu me casses les oreilles!



* *Verlan* is a language created by teenagers, more than 20 years ago, and consists at reversing the syllables in a word, and usually transforming them slightly. Even the word *verlan* is the reversed syllables of *à l'envers* = backwards. For example: *meuf*, instead of *femme* (woman), or *keuf* instead of *flic* (cop). The most commonly used *verlan* word is *beur*, the *verlan* form of *arabe*, which designates all teenagers whose parents are of Arab origin. And, in fact, it is still the *beurs* who use *verlan* the most, and who passed this habit on to other youngsters. We will examine *verlan* more in depth in our forthcoming articles on teenagers, in a later issue, as younger kids use it less.