



BREZEL-NEWS

Tenth Edition, March 2015

Newsletter of the German Saturday Schools Islington and Hackney Wick

Hello dear Saturday School families,

Our tenth edition, a small anniversary. We just missed a much bigger anniversary, the "silver jubilee" of the Saturday School Islington's foundation - the first time our predecessors actually met was 25 years ago in a church hall in Highbury in September 1989.

My shiny blue bicycle was a piece of Saturday School history, too: in 2001 Saturday School parents collected a gift of £250 for me, in recognition of my first two years of running the school. Their suggestion was to spend the money on a weekend trip with the family, maybe to Paris. At the time, my older son Calvin, then aged five, was just beginning to cycle so fast that I could not possibly manage to run after him anymore. I needed a bicycle. On the way home from Saturday School I found one on Holloway Road: I was won over by its low step over ladies' frame. The price matched the Saturday School money. Actually, our weekly trip to Saturday School was a kind of weekend excursion. Since then I have probably made three quarters of all trips to the Saturday School on my bike. That's at least 350 trips, mostly with my family, plus innumerable other journeys. On February 28th I happily related this story to one of our Saturday School fathers, and that same evening my faithful pushbike was stolen.



Cathrin's old blue Saturday School bike

Naturally I was not delighted and a bit stunned by this unexpected loss, but perhaps it was time for a change. At the moment I use the bike of my now

grown-up Calvin, or I walk through the neighbourhoods, and I am looking for a new bike, let's see what happens.

The situation with us Saturday School families is similar. Change is part of it, sometimes the end is rather unpleasant and nearly almost always a bit sad, but mostly fair and/or inevitable. New families, new children and new active helpers are the future of our schools.

We keep our fingers crossed for the 26 Saturday School students from Islington who are taking their GCSE, AS and A level exams in the coming weeks. The six A level candidates from Christine's group and some of their class mates will bid farewell afterwards – Maya, Leon, Edmund, Alexander, Gabriel, Laurenz and my "little" Nelson have been with us between 8 and 14 years.

Different boroughs have different Easter holiday dates this year. Although most of us have stopped believing in the Easter bunny, we are going to have an Easter egg hunt in Hackney and Islington on March 28th, and then go on to enjoy spring and the holidays.

Don't forget to read Brezel-News before that: with articles about bilingual upbringing in the second generation, describing the experiences of three parents each from Islington and Hackney Wick, about the Saturday School teacher seminar on February 14th (under the leadership of "our" Charlotte Schulze and with Jana Gugelot and Christine Müller as two of the speakers) and about the German gaming culture (a contribution by Florian Fischer from Hackney).

Have fun & kind regards
Cathrin

Cathrin Cordes, Managing Director
German Saturday Schools Islington & Hackney Wick

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The Double Perspective

Bilingual Education in the Second Generation

All Saturday School families know the challenges of bringing up our children bilingually. But what about those who were already brought up bilingually themselves and have perhaps never even lived in a German-speaking country? Six of our Saturday School parents from Islington and Hackney Wick shared their own experiences and explain why and how they try to pass on the German language to their own children.

Jake Hoban, whose older daughter Stella attends the Saturday School in Hackney, is a "typical" Londoner with a German mother and an American father. "My mother always spoke German to us. She loved poems which she recited to us and ballads which she sang to us. Twice a year we visited Lower Saxony to visit my Grandma. She was a gardener and on her land you could run around and play with bows and arrows, and a greenhouse where she used to hide Easter eggs for us. That was wonderful for us as young children."



A new German experience for Jake in Hackney: his daughters Stella and Marianne at the lantern walk with their grandmother

Jake is "endlessly grateful to my mother for consistently speaking German with us, especially at a time where she was frequently advised not to do so. That's why it has been so important to me to speak German with my children from the very beginning – if you can do something as great as that for them, you really should! My daughters (aged seven and three) mostly speak English, even with me. In the beginning that used to bother me, but now I believe that you have to be a little more relaxed about it. The most important thing is that I speak German with them and that they understand me. What really helps is my mother – the fact that someone else besides me speaks German. As far as Saturday School is concerned, it is important to me that it is fun."

a small part of German culture. For example, he never experienced Carnival and lantern walks himself, "partly because of the time of year in which we usually visited Germany." Does Jake find it hard to consistently speak German? "On the one hand no – I just got used to it. On the other hand it is a lonely task, as besides me only my mother does it, and also because there is no one to correct my occasional mistakes."

Libby Fogg, teacher of the eldest class in Hackney Wick, grew up in Scotland with a German mother and an English father. Her daughters, Marianne and Sophie, both attended Saturday School in Islington. "My mother tried to speak German with us but eventually gave up. At some point she simply couldn't be bothered anymore. My mother belonged to a generation that distanced itself from Germany, a generation that felt embarrassed about speaking German in public. I learnt German in the holidays: Every year we spent a month in Germany. There I spent a lot of time with German children. As a child I developed a passion for German. At home I read a lot and learnt poems. My English father who also spoke perfect German helped me with the German grammar. I think I inherited his enthusiasm and passion for the German language.

Libby and her daughters mostly use English in their everyday communication: "I wanted them to speak German, too, but we rarely talk to each other in German, as it doesn't feel natural. But I read to them a lot. We used to learn poems, for example. Together, we all learnt Goethe's Prometheus by heart. My daughter Marianne took German A-Level and she did very well. They are both very motivated, enjoy German and can communicate well with relatives. I am happy that they have learnt it."



Libby while teaching her class in Hackney

Richard Thadchanamoorthy's earliest experiences with German are similar to Libby's. Richard, who comes to the Islington school with his sons Benjamin, ten, and Oscar, seven, grew up in England. His father is from Sri Lanka. "My mother

only spoke English with us. She came to England in the 50s and thought it was better if we didn't stand out too much. Therefore we didn't speak German together. When I was 15 I finally tried to learn German, with my mother's help. At school I had not been permitted as my French grades were not good enough. My German only really took off when I was 18 and went interrailing with a German textbook in my luggage and taught myself German. After that I took a German GCSE – on my own initiative - and passed with a C. Later, when I was a police officer, I took evening classes in German and English and sat my A-Levels. I went on to study German and Italian and for eight years worked as a language teacher for German and Italian. I have always known that if I was to have children that I was going to teach them German.



Corinna and her brother in the Piazza outside Milan Cathedral

Richard explains that they did not have much contact with their German relatives. "Especially the older generation was not very welcoming towards us as my mother had married a Sri Lankan man. That was not so nice. Despite that I have always wanted to learn German. My children have never been to Germany yet. But this year we are going on our first holiday in Germany together. I have made contact with some of my younger cousins. It has been hard for my children to learn German as they can only speak it with me. They do see my mother regularly but she finds it unnatural to speak German with my children. In the early years I very intensively and consistently spoke German with the them. But I had complaints, for example from my wife's parents. They did not want me to always speak German with the children. So I started to speak English more and more. But I try as much as possible to stick with German. It really is a great challenge to motivate the children to speak German. I have even resorted to offering them £1 as a reward for speaking German for the whole Sunday."

Corinna Ferros was born in England, has a German mother and an English father. Her daughter Althea, six, attends the Islington School, and her two older sons also speak German well. "For the first five years of my life, my mother was very consistent," says Corinna. "My English aunt

encouraged her to always speak German with us. It was quite hard for her because we lived in a totally English environment." When Corinna was five, the family moved to Milan in Italy for five years. "In Milan I went to an English school," says Corinna. "I think it helped my German because we only spoke English and German at home, and both languages were equal in our family. I heard Italian on TV, for example, and from the children I played with. The other reason, why Italy was good for my German is the fact that we had a house on Lake Garda. Lots of Germans went there for their holidays and we met many German families there and made good friends. I learnt a lot of German there and also learnt a lot about the country and the people.

"I probably find it easier to bring my children up bilingual than some Germans: Firstly, I simply copy what my parents did and do exactly what they did with us. Secondly, my children hear me speak German quite loudly. Because I am also English, I can be openly German. I sometimes even exaggerate the German part a little. I don't feel embarrassed. Others may feel embarrassed to speak German in public. I am proud to be both German and English." Corinna also finds it interesting how she is seen by others. "As soon as people know that I have two nationalities, English people see me as German and Germans see me as English."

For Corinna and her children it is a matter of course to speak German together: "I would never speak English with my children. My German grammar is not always perfect, but I think it is better to get it right 90 % of the time but to have a good accent. I have given up on many other good intentions: my children watch TV, play video games and don't always eat healthy food. But with one thing we have persevered: speaking German together."



Eric's grandparents of German origin with their children in Rio: Hans Heinrich Brücher was born in Lisbon and Luisa Carlota von Lassperg in Brazil

Eric Camara, whose children Marina, ten, and Mark, six, are in Hackney Wick, grew up in Brazil. "I lived in Rio and in the South of Brazil, where a wave of Germans immigrated in the 19th century. From 14 I attended the German School in Rio and took my German A levels (Abitur). Although my mother tongue is Portuguese, my first language was German, at least according to my mother who always spoke German with me, the same as my grandparents did with her. My grandfather was Portuguese: He came from a German family, but was born and grew up in Portugal and my grandmother grew up in a family of German origin in Brazil. We had many friends of German descent.



Saturday School students Marina and Marc visiting Rio

Eric's motivation for raising his children bilingually is the continuation of a family tradition. He does not have a German passport and apart from participating in a student exchange programme to Mainz for four months at the age of 11, he only spent a short time living in Berlin as an adult. "All my life I have been speaking German. All that effort would have been in vain if I did not pass on the language. Also, it is obviously an advantage for my children to speak another language."

Eric's children speak fluent German and Portuguese because their parents are very disciplined. "We have always taken care not to mix the languages and we do not let the children mix either. Now we can see that it has paid off. Our children speak better German than some children with two German parents. They also speak very good Portuguese. When the four of us are sitting at the table, the conversations always take place in two languages. It works because everyone understands both languages. Another rule is that we never speak English at home."

Our teacher in Islington, Yasmine Burnett, also grew up with three languages: English, German and Bengali. "My parents met in London and spoke English together. We lived in Dhaka (then East Pakistan, today Bangladesh). With the neighbourhood children, my father's family, my friends and my nanny I spoke Bengali. My mother read German fairy tales to us, taught us German songs and poems and played music by Peter Alexander or Hildegard Knef on our expensive Grundig tape recorder. At the Germany Embassy, where my

mother worked, there were German events. I can vividly remember my first puppet show. At the age of five I visited Germany for the first time and I soon fell in love with the country and my German family. We stayed for six months and in that time I managed to improve and consolidate my knowledge of German. Christmas in Germany was magical and we felt comfortable and at ease. I am convinced that this helped us to "feel at ease" with the language. It was a strong foundation we could build on."

Back in Dhaka they faced turbulent times after the civil war between the then East and West Pakistan erupted in 1970: "I was 10 years old when we had to leave our home. We fled to Germany, and later moved to London, where my two daughters, Manon and Cosima grew up as well. When Manon was three, she started at the Saturday School in Islington. Both my daughters, who are now 18 and 25, spent many years at Saturday School and still have contact with friends from their Saturday School circle. Manon even went on to study German in London – just like me. She spent her third year in Fürth, near Nürnberg, where she worked as a language assistant. Unfortunately, Cosima has little contact with Germany, but like Manon she is proud of her German background and identity."

The various stories of our bilingual parents come to the same conclusion - all of them seem content that they have learned the German language, and they are so convinced about the advantages of multilingualism that they have chosen bilingual education for their own children. The difficulties they experience in raising their children bilingually are often similar from those of other Saturday School families. But the question of identity is even more complex and perhaps they have to go to even greater lengths to create an emotional bond between their children and the German language.

by Martina Köpcke



Summer 1965: Yasmine's first visit to Germany

What did our Teachers learn?

Workshop for Saturday School Teachers

On February 14th our Saturday School students were on holiday. Nevertheless our teachers Inka, Jana and Libby from Hackney Wick and Barbara, Caroline, Christine, Yasmine, Gabi, Charlotte, Karin und Martina from Islington were tirelessly on the go on behalf of Saturday School business. Under the direction of Charlotte Schulze, long-standing teacher in Islington and VDSS-Chairwoman since last summer, the annual teacher seminar of the VDSS took place. The VDSS (Association of German Speaking Saturday Schools) is the umbrella organisation of our Saturday Schools in Great Britain. This year, 50 teachers from 15 Saturday Schools took part, and even "Allemann Fun" from Edinburgh was represented.

Charlotte: "We were particularly pleased to have had so many schools from all regions. Also, this year's training programme was sponsored by the German Embassy, the Swiss Embassy and the Austrian Cultural Forum, plus we were given use of the beautiful rooms at the Goethe-Institut in South Kensington."



Charlotte in charge: with Karin and other workshop participants at the Goethe-Institut

The day began with an "English" morning, i.e. talks in English. Ana Souza from the Institute of Education (London) started by describing the history of Saturday Schools in Great Britain. Nationally there are more than 5 000 so-called "supplementary language schools", more than 1

000 of those in London alone. Ana explained the positive aspects and challenges of these schools and addressed the problems of bilingual education in more detail. What level of importance do German and English have for our children? It was rather challenging to fit the linguistic repertoire of our bilingual children or even our own into a concept: Is German the mother tongue (L1), the second language (L2) or a foreign language (FL)? And what is the actual definition of bilingual? Do I have to have grown up with two languages, or just demonstrate a certain degree of competence in more than one language?

And what influence does bilingualism have on our children's identities? Ana described a new understanding of identity of children who grow up with more than one language. In her many years of working with Brazilian groups in England she has established that such children do not see themselves as belonging to one specific language. They develop a multicultural and multilingual personality that cannot be confined by just one definition, but should be encouraged to grow in all directions so they can develop their full potential. We realised just how important both the parents' efforts and our children's attendance at Saturday School are.

The second part of the "English morning" was dedicated to a completely different subject: the use of new media in language teaching. Linda Owen, a language consultant from Bristol, presented a large variety of ideas for the use of new media in our Saturday School, which are mostly rather "low-tech" and often have only limited access to modern technology such as whiteboards, internet, tablets etc. Linda demonstrated how media such as internet programmes and apps can still play a big part in lesson preparation and in supporting our children's learning. The variety of websites that are available free of charge were quite an eye opener for many of us, and these ideas will hopefully find their way into our classrooms, not least thanks to the excellent handouts.

Both speakers stayed for lunch and willingly answered more of our questions. After the well-deserved lunch break with a fresh and healthy buffet, the afternoon programme continued with four workshops, two always running concurrently. They were chaired by Saturday School teachers from different schools and presented an opportunity to exchange experiences within smaller groups.

Islington's Christine Müller shed more light on the communication between teachers and parents at Saturday School. At first the about 20 participants

had to tackle a riddle and introduce one another. Christine: "Then I asked everybody to remember their own parents' attitude and interactions with school." Yes, that's right! Sometimes thinking back to how our parents dealt with school can be a key to successful relationships with our pupils' parents. If you know the kind of walls which are blocking the road you can tear them down more easily or go around them. "The idea to think back to your own time at school and your own parents' behaviour, was very enlightening", comments Caroline Hobkinson from Islington.



Caroline and other teachers following Christine's session

In the second part of the workshop all participants exchanged ideas to improve the communication with parents, for example via information letters and emails, in which we teachers can inform about topics and lesson content and give feedback.

In the parallel workshop, Katrin MacSweeney, who has been the Director of the Saturday School Manchester for almost 20 years, introduced textbooks which she uses in her lessons. In the ensuing discussion it became obvious that the approach is different from school to school and that some schools do not use textbooks at all. Barbara Gross from Islington: "I was very impressed with the variety of different material that seems to give children a really solid basis in the German language. However, parents often end up paying an extra contribution."

In the second pair of workshops "our" Jana Gugelot introduced a range of language-supporting games which she regularly uses in her class: "I

chose games that we have in Hackney and that I can relate to. Also I presented a number of group games which promote speaking German. In my lessons I always start with a circle time. My motto is that the children should have fun while learning. That's why I like to play games where the children speak German, whether it's just one word or a whole sentence. For example I introduced "Tick Tack Bumm", a game where a bomb explodes (not really!) and children have to say a German word relating to a predetermined topic, or my favourite game with the "opposite cards". The children in my class are already specialists with adjectives." Jana also likes to play bingo, either with numbers or a version with terms from the countryside, the city and the mountains. Other participants also recommended exciting and appropriate games.

Concurrently, Bettina Wulf and Silvia Hohmann from the Saturday School Richmond discussed the important topic of "Grammar in Saturday School Lessons". They presented practical ideas on how to teach grammar casually so the children don't necessarily notice, for example through illustrative presentations and playful repetition: "In our lessons we use melodies to help memorise and repeat rules, we visualise parts of sentences through colour or represent rules using theatre. These alternative methods allow us to intrigue children and to present grammar in a more interesting way, with the consequence that they are able to remember and apply rules more easily. During the following discussion we dealt with questions such as "When should you start teaching grammar?" and "How many specialist terms are necessary?"

A huge compliment to Charlotte, whose concept of introducing the Saturday Schools within a greater context and then expanding on concrete topics and issues of Saturday School lessons was very well received. All teachers left the Goethe Institute with new insights and much appreciated material, thus well equipped for another Saturday School year. Jana is already looking forward to the next meeting of the Association of German Speaking Saturday Schools, "but perhaps not on Valentine's Day!"

Contributions from Barbara Gross, Jana Gugelot, Martina Köpcke, Katrin MacSweeney, Christine Müller, Charlotte Schulze and Bettina Wulf

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Of Meeples, Dice and Maps

"No, you can't lay that star there, it's the wrong colour!"

"A twenty, a twenty, a twenty! ... HAHAHAHA!"

Such snippets of odd conversation have become a staple background noise at The Big Green Bookshop in Wood Green. For over three years now, they've hosted a board game afternoon every last Sunday of the month. A band of board game loving geeks has formed, and we have named ourselves "Board to Death". To pick such a daft pun as a name couldn't be more English, but there's something uniquely German about these sessions.

I grew up in a family that simply loved playing games. Card games Skat or Swabian Binokel as well as UNO, Yahtzee with dice (sometimes called "Kniffel" in Germany) and a whole range of board games. Like most German families we had the traditional "Ravensburger Spielesammlung" set, with pachisi, draughts, halma and the like. I am still proud to be from near Ravensburg; people abroad have heard of it, if more for its jigsaws than its games. We also had the more recent classic Crazy Labyrinth, by Ravensburger, as well as various new ones, which had won the "Spiel des Jahres" award ("Game of the Year"). I am still very familiar with German geography more because of a (frankly not really exciting) game called "Deutschlandreise" (Tour of Germany) than for having learnt much about it at school! We would play games for hours on end.

After a few game-less years in London, where I had arrived in 2000, I decided to buy Deutschlandreise, primarily as a teaching tool for my students (it has a big map!), but maybe also subconsciously because I was missing the old gaming days of my youth. Eventually, I bought a little collection of games, many of which are for fun, but quite a few of which are also useful for my lessons. Explaining sports or games, writing or understanding instructions, following rules, as well as describing pictures in detail, are exercises very beneficial to tidy up a thought process and understand as well as express oneself in a foreign language, for adults as well as for children.

"The Crazy Labyrinth", for example, can be played with quite young children. The layout of a twisted labyrinth changes with every player's go. The name, Das Verrückte Labyrinth, is that rare thing, a German pun: "verrückt" usually means "crazy", but can also mean „rearranged“. As a consequence, one can't be too attached to a longer route or long term plan, one has to adjust, and quickly and continuously find a plan B (or C or D). An essential life skill! Games can teach many other skills,

mathematical, spatial awareness, as well as the essential skills of being a graceful loser or winner! Granted, not everyone masters these.

As I came to use board games a little more frequently with students of all levels and ages, and as my hobby gaming took off with the group in the book shop, I started to think a little more about what it is about board games and Germany. When one mentions board games as a hobby, most people think of the odd game of Risk, Monopoly or Scrabble they've played, as well as ancient classics like chess. We never play those classics in Wood Green (though my Mum and I are fiercely competitive when it comes to Scrabble, which I find a little frustrating in English, most words being just too blooming short!), but rather new games, some very pretty, some creative, many full of strategy. Maybe there is something German about planning complicated ways of making points, building roads, accumulating resources, and judging risk? Some games can be quite complicated, but the complications are always more limited than life's own complications. Maybe there is a need to learn how to cope with uncertainties by holding on to more or less predictable outcomes within the framework of the rules of a game.



Florian clearly enjoying a game with some friends

The most famous of these games which broke out of the German games community is "The Settlers of Catan", which now exists in very different variations. Quite a few people have played it, or at least heard of it. Carcassonne is another international hit. Looking for further inspiration, I chanced upon an English Wikipedia page entitled „German-style board games“. It appears that a growing number of English and American geeks have cottoned on to the fact there is more to playing board games than a Simpsons Monopoly merchandise version bought once for Christmas and played once or twice. Who can blame them, Monopoly tends to drag on and on until someone says "Let's just establish the winner after this

round". Many of the new games have the advantage of being quite predictable in length, be it 20 minutes or 2 hours.

There is a great source to see how they work before you buy them, courtesy of US actor and geeks' guru Wil Wheaton, who rose to fame in Star Trek - Next Generation. He is a devoted board gamer and has for many years run a YouTube Channel that test drives games, called Table Top. In each 30 minute episode he and three friends explain and play a new game and give their personal verdict on the games' pros and cons. And, yes, many, if not most of them are German, with Carcassonne and Catan maybe the two biggest hits since Monopoly, Risk and Scrabble. The industry is doing quite well, in a way maybe not to be expected in the age of electronic games. It is a vast and exponentially growing industry, and many of the most popular board games now come with app versions (try "Hey, that's my Fish", or indeed Catan or Carcassonne).



Florian's adult class playing Qwirkle in Hackney Wick

Two years ago one of my students, Armenian British but married to a games loving German, dressed up as a contessa, along with other family members. Off they went to Essen's annual trade fair of the board game industry, the Spielmesse Essen, to promote and sell her cousin's invention Coup, a simply card game of strategy and backstabbing set at an Italian court. He sold all the ones he produced and has since sold the rights to various companies in various countries. This Spielmesse is going stronger from year to year, as is the "Spiel des Jahres" award, now as often awarded to French or American concoctions as to German ones.

So what's stopping you from getting into games? Happy family gaming evenings are still a source of the fondest memories for me, big laughs can be had and many invaluable lessons can be learnt from gathering round a table with a beautifully designed board, wooden meeples, dice and cards, toy trains and mini dragons. Here are short descriptions of four games we've loved playing recently:

Qwirkle is a rather simple game that nevertheless requires some smarts, in which players lay rows of retro looking tiles of either the same symbol or the same colour, a mix of domino and Scrabble. It's suitable for relatively young children and doesn't involve any reading or language skills. It's great for just two players (as is Carcassonne, quite rare).

Dixit could easily be played in English or German and is perfect for people who want a change from games all about strategy, power or money. Large cards with beautiful surreal scenes like from a children's book of dreams have to be described neither too obscurely nor too unambiguously to only allow SOME of the players to guess which card one has been talking about. Best with a minimum of 4 players.

Takenoko was one of last year's top discoveries; depending on „task cards“ one has to accumulate points either by adding bamboo fields to the table in certain patterns, growing bamboo, or having a cute mini panda eat up other people's bamboo. Not too long and for 3 or 4 players, it is beautifully designed.

Ticket to Ride is like a much less militaristic (and shorter!) version of Risk. One has to link certain US (or European, there are different geographic versions) cities with railways (on a lovely map) by collecting the right combination of same-coloured cards from a stack. The points are counted on a counter border all around the edge of the board.

Game on?
by Florian Fischer



Very useful for teaching German and a "Ravensburger classic": Deutschlandreise

Saturday School Dates

28th March

last day of spring term, Easter Egg hunt

18th April - 11th July

Summer Term Saturdays

23rd and 30th May

Half Term holidays