

# Raising Multilingual Children

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## Outline of this talk

- Introduction
- Language Milestones
- Multilingualism and its benefits
- Multilingual Parenting
- Questions



### Language milestones

Age	Language your child UNDERSTANDS	Language your child PRODUCES
Birth – 5months	Follows your gaze	Produces vowels, babbles
6-9 months	Turns to her name, understands 'no', looks where you point	Makes real syllables, lip rolls and trilling
12 months	Recognizes words of interest	A few easy words, participates in but doesn't lead the routines (bye-bye)
16-18 months	Average number of words understood: 140-190	First words come ~ 10-18months, average vocabulary 70-110 words. It ok if child doesn't say any words until ~18 as long as she understands the words.



### Language milestones

Age	Language your child UNDERSTANDS	Language your child PRODUCES
24 months	Understands most of what she hears	Major milestone = two-word combinations (nice soup)
36 months	Understands emotions and mental states	Simple sentences, takes longer turns in reciprocal conversations
5 years	Basic interpersonal skills	Good at complex sentences
8 years	Abstract language, understands irony	Good at telling coherent and complex stories



### How to promote language development

- Treat infants and young children as conversational partners
- Use positive reinforcement
- Start a conversation from child's interest
- Never laugh at child's attempts to communicate
- Expand child's utterances
- Ask open-ended questions
- Scaffolding



**The person who knows**

**only one language**

**does not truly know that language**

**- Goethe**



### Bilingual upbringing

- Learning a second (or third) language
- More common than we think (Canada, India, Singapore, Belgium etc.)
- Beneficial for both parent & the child



### Benefits from **parents'** point of view

- Emotional
  - It's a link to family and cultural background
- Intellectual
  - Investment in children's education
  - Can get a job abroad easily
  - Won't have to struggle learning the language as an adult
  - More opportunities in business



### Benefits from **children's** point of view

- Emotional
  - Intercultural awareness
  - Acceptance (native speakers 'like' foreigners who can speak the language well)
  - Being an active participant in their heritage culture (customs, jokes, literature etc.)
  - Family structure and 'the role of parent'



### Benefits from **children's** point of view

- Intellectual
  - Metalinguistic Awareness
  - Thinking Skills
  - Onset of dementia is 4 years later for bilinguals (75yo)




### Metalinguistic Awareness

- the ability of a person to reflect on and consciously ponder about oral and written language and how it is used
  - going beyond communication and meaning, and instead focusing attention on the underlying structures
- Metacognition - "knowing about knowing"
- **Using** language vs. **seeing** language



### Metalinguistic Awareness

Suppose everyone decided to call the sun *the moon* and the moon *the sun*.

- What would be in the sky when we go to bed at night?
  - The sun
- What would the sky look like?
  - Dark \*\*\*
- Monolingual children answer 'light'
- Bilingual children are better able to only focus on form and not the meaning




### Metalinguistic Awareness: Why important?

- Learning how to read and write earlier
  - Phonemic awareness & Concept of print
  - Dog, Cow & six - 6





king
bird

- 38% monolinguals, 82% bilinguals gave the correct answer
- 4yo bilinguals > 5yo monolinguals



### Enhanced Mental Flexibility

- Divergent thinking
  - Bilinguals better able to come up with solutions
- Selective attention
  - Ability to focus on only one or two aspects of a task while suppressing attention to other aspects



BLUE	RED	YELLOW	ORANGE
GREEN	BLUE	PURPLE	RED
PURPLE	YELLOW	RED	BLUE
ORANGE	BLUE	YELLOW	RED
RED	GREEN	ORANGE	BLUE
PURPLE	YELLOW	BLUE	ORANGE

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### Ways of bilingualism

- Bilingual first language acquisition (BFLA)
- Early second language acquisition (SLA)

Parents should have :

- A positive attitude towards bilingualism
- An impact belief
- Enough reasons provided to the child to use the minority language
- Enough exposure provided to the child to be able to learn it

- Not every child ends up being active bilingual (25% are passive)



## What matters?

### EXPOSURE

**Bare minimum 20 hours a week**



## Strategies for bilingual upbringing

- One parent - one language (**OPOL**)
- Minority language at home (**ML@H**)
- Time and place (**T&P**)
- Mixed language policy (**MLP**)



- It's OK to switch between strategies

- If you are a nonnative speaker, don't hesitate as long as you have some level of proficiency. Don't worry about grammar.

- Make sure you stimulate your child enough, in terms of language and cognitive skills.

- If the child refuses to answer back in the same language... Try to make the language attractive & useful to the child.



## How to promote bilingual development - I

- Be consistent
- Make the second language especially rewarding
- Use lots of media
- Direct interaction is the best
- Never make fun of your child's mistakes (try not to laugh because it's cute)



### How to promote bilingual development - II

- Don't ask your child to 'show off' in front of others
- Don't correct too much
- Make use of available bilingual education
- Give the language a broader context than just home
- Travel



### How to encourage your child

- Keep it simple and easy to repeat
- Associate the language with positive, desirable things
- Control your own language switching
- Be extra helpful (don't correct, co-construct)
- Use 'I-messages' instead of 'You-messages'



### Myths about Bilingualism

- Bilingual children start to speak later than monolinguals.
- Bilinguals start out school behind monolinguals and cannot catch up.



### So, bottom line is...

- Consider the benefits of bilingualism for your family and your child
- Start NOW!
- Be consistent and patient
- Enough exposure
- Make the language attractive for your child





Good luck with your bilingual journey !

Thanks! ☺

Questions ?

