

How to Raise a Bilingual Child

Nowadays, being able to speak more than one language or even two languages is a great ticket to opportunities in anything. Learning languages become more essential when people see its relevant and matters to them. For babies, an ability to speak many languages does not matter to them. All they desire is that people around them will understand what they want and what they need. Therefore, helping the babies to learn and use more than one language is different from helping a grown up child. There are many families that within the household more than one language is spoken. Usually, when the parents are from different countries, they desire to pass down their native language to a child. Moreover, there are also parents that might be from the same country but are able to communicate more than one language and desire their kids to learn. A lot of these families could be facing with the challenges and concerns regarding how to raise their baby to speak more than one language. In these paper, there are divided into three section focuses on the concerns that parents might have, challenges in accomplishing this task and some of the effectives ways to raise a bilingual baby.

Many children grew up in the bilingual environment but could only speak one language because of many concerns that parents have. Those concerns sometimes cause parents to take away a great opportunity for their children to be benefit with an ability to speak many languages. The following are the common concerns or other word is the myths.

Many parents think growing up with more than one language might confuse their children. They are afraid that their children will not be able to differentiate between different languages that they learn. The truth is they will have trouble only at the young age, but eventually around six months they will be able to tell the difference. Some parents concern in the area of speech delays. They heard from others that their children have speech delay in particular language because their children speak too many languages. However, the truth is the delay is just temporary. Bilingual children will take longer to be fluent in languages than children that are raised in monolingual environment. One last common concern that

parents usually have is mixing languages or code switching. They see children use two languages in conversation and they are afraid that it will bring a negative effect in the future. In fact, bilingual children often have one language that is stronger than the other. Sometimes they will use and pick between languages that they feel like it describes what they want to say the best. However, experts agree that codeswitching is not permanent. It will go away as children get to develop on both languages and more vocabulary enters into their lexicon. (Soto, n.d.).

Some of the challenges that bilingual family might have and cause them not to continue in raising their children with two languages is secret language, doubters and language selection.

When the spouse speaks different languages, for example the husband speaks only English and the wife speaks English and her native language, when the second language is taught to a child which only the wife could understand, it causes secret language problem. Sometimes one of the spouse might not be happy with their children speak another language that they could not understand. This challenge affects many families cease to teach their children more than one language. However, it could be solved by discussing together what language that will be spoken within the family and if it needed or not (Bosemark, n.d.).

Not everyone thinks that raising a child to speak all family languages is a good idea. There are people that will make parents doubt and tell the parents all the wrong ideas about it. They might say it will not work or the parents expects too much from their children. The parents should ignore all of these doubters and focus on what they have agree with their spouse (Rosenback, 2014).

As I mentioned before that bilingual children can sometimes fluent in one language than the other. This cause language selection, which is children choose to stick to the language that they are comfortable even though they understand another language. For the minority language parents, they can feel disappointed and want to give up. At this point, the parents should not give up. They should continue to exposed their children to the language (Rosenback, 2014).

The question that many parents would like to know is what they can do to raise their children in bilingual environment effectively. The following are some strategies that have been used and the effect turns out good for children.

Parents need to have a practical plan. They need to agree on the language that they will speak to children or when another language will be used in where, what situation. Then, parents must stick to the plan. There are many ways to do it, whether it be one person always speaks a foreign language or the whole family speaks a foreign language in addition of the main language that was already spoken. If there is no one speak a foreign language, then the parents must find an outside source (Bosemark, n.d.).

Planning will avoid all the confusion between languages for children as well. I got married with a husband who speaks four languages, which are English, two dialog of Chinese and Malay. I speak only English and Thai. We have been discussing and come to an agreement of what languages we want our children to learn and we decided English, Chinese and Thai. Since we communicate in English, certainly our children will learn how to speak English. Chinese is very useful language so we want them to have that for opportunities in the future. Last is Thai, which I personally would like them to know in order to communicate with my family in Thailand who do not speak English and also to pass on the heritage. We also discussed how we can accomplish this goal. We came up with the schedule that we will follow when we have children. The schedule design for children to be exposed to all the languages in an organized way. We know that it will not be an easy thing, but it will only benefit the children which we desire. The example of the schedule is below.

<u>Days</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Thai</u>	<u>Chinese</u>
Monday	Dad	Mom	
Tuesday	Mom		Dad
Wednesday	Dad	Mom	

Thursday	Mom		Dad
Friday	Dad	Mom	
Saturday	Mom		Dad
Sunday	Both		

According to the schedule, both of us will take turn speak to children in English. The day that one of us do not speak English is when we ether speak Thai or Chinese. Sunday is the only day we will all speak English because it is the family day. In my perspective, the plan is effective and if its followed strictly, it will be very effective for children.

After planning, the parents need to be constantly looking for opportunities that their children will be able to use the language in different environment. They must build a support network. They can do this by finding other families that their children are learning the same language. This will benefit individuals to share knowledge and learning from each other. Having friends or peers speaking the language that you want your child to learn is quite essential. Because the most important thing for a child is to play, that is how they learn. Meanwhile, parents have to very patient. Doubts will come in and many things will rise to make you doubt. It is a long-term commitment like other families that raising in a monolingual environment. It takes times and children will fail sometimes. Instead of focusing on the failures, it is better to focus on all the little success that they accomplish. Parents must always praise and never give up (Bosemark, n.d.).

Another example for ways to expose children to the language is to invest. This could be done in many ways, whether to hire a tutor, take them to the country that speaks the language they are learning or read with them and invest your time to expose them to the language. There are so many ways that parents can do to boost their confidence in speaking a language and helping to see why it matters. As parents

making time for their children, the children will have motivation to speak more than just the feeling of another thing that they have to learn (Rosenback, 2014).

In conclusion, raising a bilingual child is possible and it will only benefit the child to have an ability to speak many languages. There should be no concern of raising them in the bilingual environment. Challenges will confront the parents but as they apply those effective ways, all of the challenges will disappear little by little. There are more that parents can do to help their child learn two languages as they are growing up according to individual needs. Moreover, all of these information also applies to raising a child Multilanguage as well. Children have an incredibly talents to learn language and parents do not need to worry of they will learn too much. As the time pass by, the result will show step by step and it will eventually leave the good value on the children to take with them into the world.

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