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## 6 Reasons Why Children Should Learn Languages As Early As Possible

by languagelizard on [September 27, 2011](#) · [13 comments](#)

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The research extolling the benefits of bilingualism abounds in today's day and age. Bilingualism helps us better understand the structure of languages and can give us an in-depth view of another culture. Bilingualism can [delay the onset of Alzheimer's symptoms](#). It can help people [find jobs](#) here in the United States and in other countries.

Although most of us in the United States don't start learning additional languages until middle school or college, for some time now studies have shown that this is not the ideal time to begin learning new languages. In fact, recent studies are showing that the best time to pick up a new language is when we are very young. Rather than causing linguistic disorders or difficulties (as was once believed), being exposed to additional languages from birth is actually the best time to start.

Does this mean that we can not learn languages when we are older? No! It just means that if we are trying to decide when to introduce a new language to our children, the earlier the better.

*Here are 6 fantastic reasons why children should be introduced to languages as early as possible:*

- **Accent:** It has already been established that children who learn a language when they are very young have a much better chance of not having a “foreign” accent when speaking another language. [Research from a team at the University of Washington](#), which focuses specifically on childhood speech perception, has noted that as we get older, it is harder to pick up additional languages with native-like pronunciation. Thus, one very compelling reason to start children off with another language at a young age is to give them the gift of a native accent!
- **10,000 hours:** Malcolm Gladwell in his book [Outliers](#) argues that to learn something well, it takes at least 10,000 hours of time on task (based on a study by [K. Anders Ericsson](#)) as well as the opportunity to learn the given task. It is hard for an adult to find 10,000 hours to devote to language learning. However, if we were to start in childhood, then 10,000 hours spread over a number of years (or a lifetime) doesn't sound so bad, does it? Starting children early with language learning gives them this “leg up” that will help them succeed in mastering a language. Plus, using more than one language over a lifetime is the key behind the [cognitive benefits of bilingualism](#) that research has shown.
- **Enjoyment:** Young children enjoy learning. They don't care if an activity will improve their cognitive ability or motor skills. They just want to jump in and have a great time doing it. This same approach is true for children learning a new language. We would never try introducing high school students to a foreign language via children's nursery rhymes, silly songs and hand puppets while sitting in a circle on the carpet. Yet, for young children, this is actually the best way to go about it because it makes language learning so much fun. It is amazing how quickly children will pick up a new language while having fun!
- **Undaunted:** The wonderful thing about young children is that they will give things a try without necessarily worrying if it is correct or not. This applies to language learning as well. Young children will often jump right in to try out what they have learned without worrying about mistakes. They are eager to see the response they will get from other students and adults when trying out their new words and vocabulary. It is an exciting and empowering experience for children.
- **Support network:** Young children have the opportunity for exposure and input from many different influences: parents, teachers, peers, and extended family. When both teacher and parent are on board with language learning, then children can be given language exposure, support and interaction all day long. A teacher can introduce words and songs in class while the parent further reinforces what was learned by offering activities and language exposure at home

through CDs, bilingual books, games, videos and more. Plus, young children don't have to deal with the difficulties of self-motivation that high school students or adults face when trying to learn a new language!

- **Unexceptional:** Introducing children to languages when they are young helps them accept the fact that bilingualism and multilingualism are normal in our world. Speaking more than one language shouldn't be treated as something out of the ordinary. It is simply a element of belonging to our global society. When young children are exposed to other languages and cultures at a very young age through books, videos, songs and objects, they will have the opportunity to feel comfortable growing up in a world where languages and cultures intertwine on a daily basis.

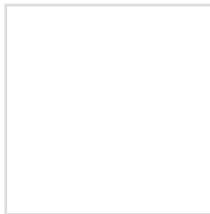
Today's copious research should help parents and teachers feel motivated and excited to expose their young children and students to languages and cultures at very young ages. Although as much language exposure as possible is best, [even a small amount can have tremendous benefits!](#)

If your children or students are older, don't hesitate to introduce them to a new language as well! It is never, ever too late to learn a language. In fact, language learning never ends! You can help your children and students start racking up their 10,000 hours today!

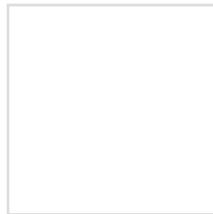
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*When did you learn your additional language(s)? Are you convinced that learning languages from a very young age is as beneficial as the studies claim?*

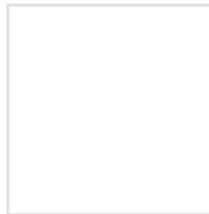
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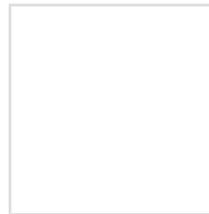
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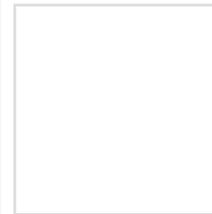
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