

“We really believe that we have given our children a gift”

Discourses on bilingual child-rearing in an online parenting forum

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Abstract

Parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing are influenced by prevailing language ideologies and popular discourses on the advantages of bilingualism. This study seeks to explore the ideologies underpinning parental decisions on family language policies in a predominantly English monolingual environment. Focussing on how the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy, the discursive construction of bilingual parenting is explored in one of the largest online parenting communities in Australia, essentialbaby.com.au, using critical discourse analysis. This is a ‘mainstream’ forum that is not a priori concerned with language. The corpus consists of 15 discussion threads totalling 266 comments posted between 2007 and 2014 by parents and carers seeking and giving advice on bilingual child-rearing. Findings suggest that due to the increasing valorisation of bilingualism in general discourses, bilingual family language policies, such as the ‘one parent – one language’ strategy, have become incorporated into mainstream parenting strategies. Overall, this study finds that parents are often faced with contradictory bilingual child-rearing realities that inform their language-related parenting decisions. The research extends existing literature on how the monolingual mindset operates on an individual level, and has implications for language policy at individual, institutional and state levels.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “‘We really believe that we have given our children a gift’: Discourses on bilingual child-rearing in an online advice forum’ has not previously been submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree, to any university or institution other than Macquarie University. I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and that it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Livia Gerber', written over a horizontal dotted line.

Livia Gerber

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09 October 2015

List of Abbreviations and Conventions

List of academic abbreviations and acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
FLP	family language policy
HL-vs-CL	home language versus community language
LOTE	language other than English
ONOL	one nation, one language
OPOL	one parent – one language

List of corpus abbreviations

The corpus for this project is based on publicly available data from the online parenting forum www.essentialbaby.com.au. The following is a list of abbreviations commonly used in comments found in the corpus:

DD	dear daughter
DH	dear husband
DP	dear partner
DS	dear son
ESL	English as a second language
LOL	laugh out loud
OMG	oh my god
OP	original poster/post
PP	previous poster

Data conventions

The corpus was compiled and prepared for presentation using the following conventions: Forum threads have been numbered in chronological order from oldest to newest post (see Table 1, p. 26). The original post in each thread is titled OP plus the thread number, e.g. OP7 is the original post in thread 7. Comments within each thread have been numbered chronologically, e.g. 4.7 is the 7th comment in thread 4. Comments within the threads that were posted by the original poster are labelled with the comment number, e.g. OP7.16 is the 16th comment in thread 7 which is authored by the original poster of that thread.

All comments used as examples have been copy pasted directly. No changes have been made and grammatical or orthographic errors have not been corrected nor marked with [*sic*].

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1. Introduction

In 1994, when I was five years old, as part of a project on multiculturalism, my primary school in Newcastle, NSW, conducted interviews with pupils from immigrant backgrounds. My family had only arrived in Australia a few months prior: my parents knew very little English, and I knew none. As part of the project, a picture book was made by the school, with photographs and descriptive captions telling the story of our previous lives in far-away places; Switzerland, in my case. Most of the captions were only partially true due to mistranslations, yet entirely truthful in reflecting how little English we knew at the time. Fast-forward to the year 2013: I had just completed a Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics at the University of Berne, Switzerland, and was packing my bags to return to Australia. Whilst packing, I found that long-lost picture book. On the very last page, I discovered a photo of myself, proudly wearing my first school uniform during my first Easter Hat Parade. Below the photo, a short note, obviously dictated, and copied in the unsteady hand of a five-year-old. In the note, I thank the children in my class for taking care of me and for ‘writing for me all the words I need’.

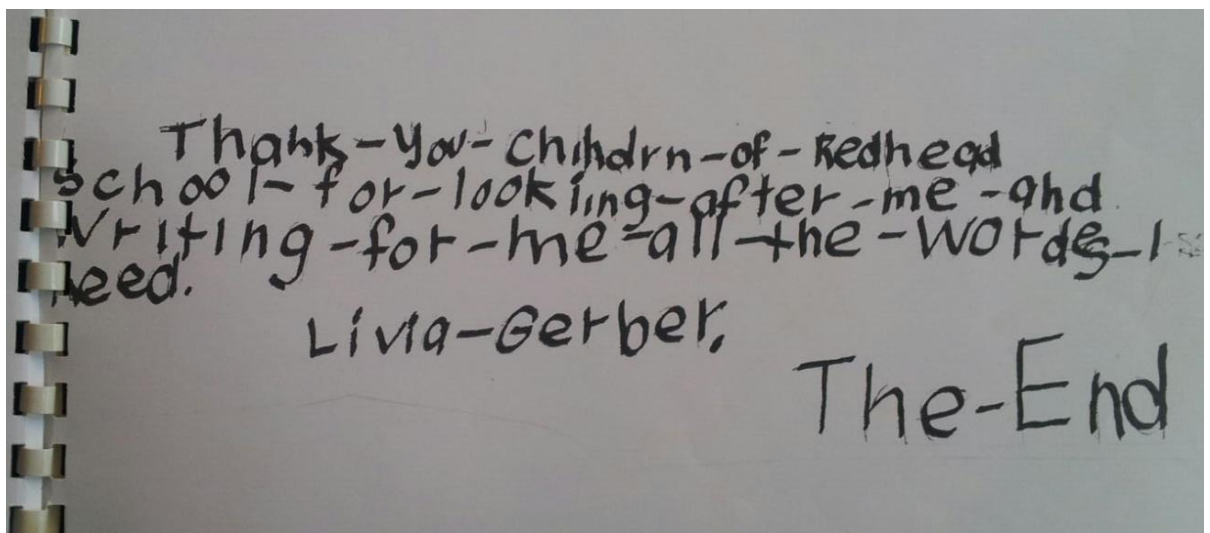


Figure 1. Livia's thank you note (1994)

Although my primary school was evidently interested in making its multicultural students feel welcome, their focus, unsurprisingly, was primarily on my (linguistic) integration, the ‘words I

needed' were English words. This obviously left the maintenance of my mother tongue to my parents. At the same time as the local school was pressuring my parents to make certain I learnt English as quickly as possible, my mother was relentlessly pressured by my grandparents to ensure their grandchildren would not forget their Swiss-German roots. Given this situation, I have often wondered whether my parents had consciously planned to raise me, and my younger siblings, bilingually when they first embarked on their adventure on the other side of the world. I have since asked my mother how she had planned to raise us bilingually. In response, she looked at me, puzzled, then laughed and said that, at the time, she did not know what she was doing.

Bilingual child-rearing in an English-dominant environment is not an easy task. In a society that largely sees English monolingualism as the norm (Clyne, 2005), promoting a language other than English (henceforth LOTE), often with little community or institutional support, can be a daunting undertaking. My mother's reaction to my question was the initial spark that ignited my interest in bilingual parenting in the Australian context. The paradox of my five-year-old self's thank you note in a book celebrating multiculturalism and multilingualism, further sparked my interest in the tension between the dominance of English and the valorisation of diversity as it is experienced by families.

Research within English-dominant contexts has long identified that due to a lack of institutional support, schools are often the site of language shift (Rubino, 2010). Language maintenance therefore usually falls to the home domain (Kipp, Clyne & Pauwels, 1995; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Armstrong de Almeida, 2006), where top-down discourses on bilingualism shape parental beliefs towards bilingual child-rearing, and ultimately contribute to minority language maintenance or shift (see De Houwer, 1999; Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Schüpbach, 2009; Kirsch, 2012). Existing research has primarily taken qualitative approaches manifest in semi-structured interviews and questionnaires (see Schwartz, 2010) to explore how family language

policies (henceforth FLP) are negotiated in the home (Döpke, 1998; King & Logan-Terry, 2008). As a result, the language ideologies underlying the choice of bilingual FLP strategy have been found to reflect wider societal attitudes towards bilingualism (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008), including the belief that by consciously adopting a bilingual FLP strategy, bilingual child-rearing is regarded as a ‘good’ parenting strategy to achieve additive bilingualism (King & Fogle, 2006).

To the best of my knowledge, very little is known about the parental attitudes on bilingual child-rearing among parents who, although interested in bilingual parenting in an English-dominant society, are not taking part in a language-specific research study. This study therefore sets out to fill this gap by examining bottom-up discourses on bilingualism in a publicly available online parenting forum, using critical discourse analysis. I intend to explore how language ideologies shape and inform parents’ understanding of bilingual child-rearing, and expect to derive implications for languages education, as a site where more support needs to be provided to families in their language-related decisions.

To address this gap in the literature, this thesis is organised as follows. Chapter 2 begins with an overview of the literature on theories of language ideology. Next, the monolingual mindset is discussed in terms of its influence on Australian languages education. The focus then turns to the ‘bilingual bonus’, a language ideology that valorises bilingualism within the home domain. This is followed by an overview of FLP studies conducted in the Australian context including a brief review of the two most commonly mentioned bilingual FLP strategies in the research literature. The chapter concludes by highlighting a relevant gap in the literature that calls for an exploration of how the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy in the Australian context.

Chapter 3 explains the methodological approach taken to address the identified lacuna. This study takes a qualitative approach to data analysis by employing critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) and thematic analysis to explore the language ideologies that inform parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing. After providing the rationale for the research approach, the principles of data collection are explained, followed by a description of the corpus, and its limitations. This chapter concludes with an outline of the methods of data analysis, and of CDA as the theoretical framework that informs the analysis of online discussion threads.

The analysis in Chapter 4 follows the research questions stated in Chapter 2. The chapter begins by addressing how contributors talk about bilingualism and the initial challenges they have faced, or are facing. This is followed by an exploration of the language-related parenting choices parents make in terms of *when* and *how* to raise their children bilingually. The analysis then turns to parents' discursive construction of bilingual FLP strategies, followed by an exploration of the causes for parents' frustration when their strategies are failing.

Finally, Chapter 5 summarises the key findings and critically discusses the results and conclusions based on the research questions. It begins with an analysis of how the monolingual mindset systematically shapes parents' understanding of bilingualism, and their choice of bilingual FLP strategy to promote double monolingual language acquisition. The discussion then turns to how the realisation of the bilingual bonus is underpinned by monolingual constraints. The section brings to light how bilingualism is valued as a generic skill, and not as a linguistic skill in its own right. Lastly, an exploration of parents' discursive construction of bilingual parenting as a 'good' parenting strategy demonstrates that bilingualism is first and foremost conceived of as a competitive advantage. Based on these findings, the conclusion suggests that more research is needed to understand how bottom-up discourses on bilingualism influence parental decisions about bilingual child-rearing upon schooling, indicating that

schools are a site for potential improvement to provide parents with more information and support in their bilingual child rearing endeavours.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, existing research into the interrelationship between prevailing language ideologies which inform parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing is reviewed. The emerging field of FLP illuminates how parental decisions are shaped by both local and global discourses on the value, and advantages, of bilingualism within society. Section 2.2 explores the literature concerning language ideologies, and how tensions arising between language ideologies shape social organisation. Section 2.3 outlines how the monolingual mindset shapes discourses on individual and societal bilingualism and influences Australian languages-in-education policies. Section 2.4 explores the belief in the bilingual bonus that valorises early childhood bilingualism as a ‘good’ parenting strategy. The focus then turns to mothers’ sense of responsibility in implementing a bilingual FLP strategy and in imparting the bilingual bonus. Section 2.5 provides an overview of FLP studies in the Australian context, giving particular focus to the ‘one parent – one language’ (henceforth OPOL) strategy. This chapter concludes by identifying a gap in the literature: there is a need to investigate how the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy. The research questions arising from this gap are addressed in Section 2.6.

2.2. Language ideologies

Silverstein (1979) defines language ideologies as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p. 193). Language ideologies arise from beliefs and attitudes about language socially shared by a group or community. Therefore, language ideologies serve as the “mediating link between social structures and forms of talk” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 55). This mediating role is further explored by Irvine and Gal (2000), who identify three semiotic processes that reveal

people's ideological understanding of the relationship between linguistic variability and social identities. These semiotic processes are: iconisation, fractal recursivity, and erasure. Iconisation is the process of mapping a linguistic form or variety onto group membership, thereby transparently linking the linguistic form to qualities of a specific group. Fractal recursivity "involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level" (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38). Oppositions such as 'us – them' or 'right – wrong' organise social and linguistic contrasts. These contrasts can be projected from an intra-group to an inter-group scale and vice versa, thereby changing the perspective of those defining the comparison (Gal, 2008). The third semiotic process, erasure, involves the oversimplification of sociolinguistic variation within a social group or a language. By conceptualising the group or language as homogenous, variation is rendered invisible (Irvine & Gal, 2000). Kroskrity (2010) states that these processes "provide useful means of describing and comparing the productive features of language ideologies" (p. 201). Therefore, the identification of these processes is important for the discussion of underlying language ideologies that inform people's beliefs and attitudes towards language and its speakers.

Moreover, Kroskrity (2010, p. 195) argues, "language ideologies represent the perception and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group". The concept of discourse refers to language-in-action; that is language users use language in a specific way for a specific purpose (van Dijk, 1997; Blommaert, 2005). By doing so, language users construct and display their membership in social groups (van Dijk, 1997). Hence, the dominance of a particular discourse or social group is fundamental in the shaping of beliefs or attitudes towards particular language use. As such, social divisions such as gender, class, generation or nationality open up the "potential to produce divergent perspectives expressed as indices of group membership" (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 197). Therefore, members' understanding of what is 'acceptable' or 'correct' about language use is influenced by the discourses they are

exposed to. These conflicting perspectives result in language ideologies being perceived as always shifting, multiple, contested, and changing (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2002; Kroskrity, 2010; Piller, 2015). Overall, beliefs about language not only shape social organisation, but are also complex expressions of social issues. On the one hand, language ideologies shape the language use associated with social constructs such as personal, group, or gender identities. On the other hand, language ideologies underpin the language use within fundamental social institutions such as the nation-state, the law, or within education (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). In summary, language ideologies are socially shared beliefs about language and language use. The ideologisation of language can be identified by focussing on the semiotic processes proposed by Irvine and Gal (2000). These processes reflect the complexity of language ideology as the mediating link between social organisation and social identity. As such, language ideologies are contested, shifting and multiple, and shaped by dominant discourses.

The ‘one nation, one language’ (henceforth ONOL) ideology is one example. This ideology is based on the “belief that monolingualism or the use of one single common language is important for social harmony and national unity” (Piller, 2015, p. 6). Tensions resulting from this language ideology can be particularly prevalent at the level of the family. Parental beliefs and attitudes towards bilingual child-rearing are challenged and influenced by socially shared beliefs about language. In the following sections, I will first discuss the influence of the monolingual mindset on Australian languages education and how the lack of support for societal bilingualism on institutional levels has resulted in the need for increased private language planning. I will then explore how beliefs about the value of bilingualism has led to an increasing number of families choosing to raise their children bilingually from an early age.

2.3. Monolingual mindset and languages education

In Australia, as is the case in other English-speaking nations such the United States or the United Kingdom, the ONOL ideology is one of the predominant language ideologies that shapes private and public language use, as well as language-in-education planning, and public policy. In the Australian context, the ONOL ideology has been termed the ‘monolingual mindset’. This term was coined by Ingrid Gogolin (1994) in German as ‘monolingualer Habitus’. Hajek & Slaughter (2015) note that Michael Clyne was the first to introduce and to popularise the English translation. Clyne (2005, p. xi) argues that a prevailing monolingual mindset largely ostracises Australia’s numerous multilingual speakers, and renders them invisible:

The greatest impediment to recognising, valuing and utilising [Australia’s] language potential is a persistent monolingual mindset. Such a mindset sees everything in terms of monolingualism being the norm, even though there are more bi- and multilinguals in the world than monolinguals and in spite of our own linguistic diversity.

De facto, Australia is a multicultural and multilingual nation (Clyne, 2011). Nevertheless, the monolingual mindset renders this multilingualism invisible, which in turn inhibits Australia’s plurilingual language potential (Clyne, 2005). Here, ‘plurilingual’ refers to individuals’ ability and agency in using more than one language for distinct purposes (Marshall & Moore, 2013). In what follows ‘bilingual’ refers to the language ability of an individual in two languages (Lüdi & Py, 2009), and ‘multilingual’ refers to the presence of more than one language within a nation, institution, or social group (Baker, 2011). Therefore, the definition of ‘individual bilingualism’ refers to an individual’s “native-speaker fluency in two linguistic codes” (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009, p. 16), and ‘societal’ or ‘community bi- or multilingualism’ refers to the language practices of a distinct social group (Baker, 2011).

In Australia, societal multilingualism is due to the fact that, according to the 2011 census data, 20.4 per cent of residents speak a LOTE at home (N=1,579,949) (ABS, 2011). As Lo Bianco

and Slaughter (2009) explain, Australia's multilingualism is generated from three main sources: Indigenous Australians, Anglophone Australians who have acquired plurilingual competencies, and immigrant Australians from non-Anglophone backgrounds. The latter group generates the largest source of multilingual skills. These language skills are either fostered "in institutions or transmitted via the intimacy networks of child-raising within families and communities" (p. 4). The census question is only directed at those households who speak a language in addition to English within the home environment. However, this percentage may not include individuals who are learning a foreign language within an institution, or speak a second language at varying proficiency levels, and hence may not perceive themselves as being plurilingual. Another reason why this percentage may also underestimate the actual number of people who speak a LOTE is that they speak this language outside the home; in the workplace, with friends and extended family, or among the wider community (Benz, 2015). Accordingly, it can be inferred that there is a "largely untapped resource of community bilingualism" (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009, p. 5) that could serve as a starting point for languages education.

In the literature it is largely agreed that the monolingual mindset is the dominant language ideology that informs language planning and policies on institutional and educational levels (see Clyne, 2005, 2008; Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009; Nicholas, 2015). LOTEs are primarily chosen for inclusion in the curriculum according to their "perceived economic value, international status, tradition of the education system and availability of teachers and materials" (Clyne, Fernandez & Grey, 2004, p. 5). Therefore, some languages are more prominent than others within the education system, resulting in the valorisation of individual bilingualism in these particular languages. For instance, over the past thirty years, languages education policy has been in the so-called 'Asianist' phase (Djité, 2011). Within this policy phase, the Federal Australian Government has been prioritising Asian language learning over European language learning in response to the increasing political and economic importance of the Asian region

for Australia (Lo Bianco, 2004; Djité, 2011). Languages education has been found to largely not reflect Australia's current language demography, despite the shifting emphasis on particular languages within it (Clyne, Fernandez & Grey, 2004). Ultimately, this results in a general underrepresentation of community languages within languages education.

Additionally, Nicholas (2015) argues that the dominance of the monolingual mindset within Australian languages education marginalises societal bilingualism in favour of individual bilingualism. Within languages education, the main focus lies on teaching English to children with a different mother tongue, as opposed to additionally promoting their competence in their native language (Nicholas, 2015). Similarly, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Armstrong de Almeida (2006) found that within Canadian discourses on early childhood education, the focus lies on the assimilation of migrant children into the monolingual English mainstream, thus 'normalising' these children. The study also found that both parents and early childhood educators understood bilingual language development to be primarily a parental responsibility. In the Australian literature on immigrant languages, the family is also considered a crucial site for the use and maintenance of community languages. However, school has been identified as a critical space "which promotes and accelerates language shift" towards English (Rubino, 2010, p. 17.6). Overall, the promotion of second language learning is primarily aimed at the English-speaking majority, thus ignoring the proportion of the population that already speaks another language (Nicholas, 2015). Ultimately, this limits the choices parents can make about their children's language competencies and increases the pressures on home language maintenance.

In summary, the monolingual mindset shapes language-in-education policies and underpins the unequal status of immigrant and foreign languages within Australian languages education. School thus plays a very limited role in supporting the maintenance of home languages. In fact, the opposite is true, and schools are often the sites of language shift. As a consequence, the

need for language maintenance efforts within the private sphere increases. This means that English – as the dominant language of the nation – marginalises other languages on both micro- and macro-levels within society. Nevertheless, Australia’s perceived and encouraged monocultural identity has been progressively challenged by its prevailing cultural diversity and demographic changes. Therefore, as Clyne (2005) emphasises, “families need to develop a conscious language policy if they are keen on ensuring that the children develop plurilingually” (p. 106). Conscious decisions on language use within the family are not only crucial for immigrant families, but are also crucial for Anglophone or mixed marriage parents interested in fostering high-level bilingualism competencies in their children.

2.4. The bilingual bonus

Often the conscious decision to raise children bilingually in the home sphere is also based on the belief that early childhood bilingualism provides children with an advantage over their monolingual peers. The following section explores what I term the bilingual bonus (the ideological valorisation of bilingualism). This ideology stands in contrast to the monolingual mindset which shapes parents’ and caregivers’ understanding of English monolingualism as the norm (Clyne, 2005). Often, communities with a largely monolingual population render monolingualism invisible, whilst bilingualism is seen as both unusual and beneficial (Clyne, 2008). Therefore, the increased dissemination of the benefits of bilingualism, particularly in the popular media, valorises parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing, and link bilingual parenting to the notion of ‘good’ parenting.

In the literature, bilingual competencies are associated with a range of cognitive, health, personal, and economic benefits for individuals and the society. It has been suggested that bilinguals have a heightened metalinguistic awareness and cognitive control that allows them to compare and switch between language systems (Mehisto & Marsch, 2011). Additionally, it has been found that “lifelong bilingualism protects against age-related cognitive decline, and

may even postpone the onset of symptoms of dementia” (Bialystok, Craik & Luk, 2012, p. 10). On a personal level, knowledge of the minority language helps maintain a connection to the country of origin, and is considered beneficial if the family decides to return there (Janssen & Pauwels, 1993). Moreover, bilingual skills have been associated with increasing children’s self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as fostering their cross-cultural understanding (King & Mackey, 2007). This cross-cultural understanding and proficiency in more than one language are considered assets when seeking employment. Therefore, bilingualism is associated with potential economic benefits that allow an individual to seek work overseas, in tourism or in a multinational company (Baker, 2011, 2014). Due to these perceived economic advantages, bilingual child-rearing in general, and bilingual education in particular, have been found to be regarded by middle-class parents as worthwhile investments (Piller, 2001). For example, King and Fogle (2006) in their interview-based study of families promoting Spanish-English bilingualism in the United States found that parents explained their bilingual FLP decisions by referring to the economic opportunities and cultural advantages their children would gain. These parents relied heavily on their personal experiences when evaluating and incorporating information and advice from the popular media, advice literature, and from family and friends into their language management. Parents’ reliance on popular media discourses indicates that the benefits of bilingualism have been widely disseminated through the media and among the general population. Parents also defended their FLP decisions by positioning themselves as ‘good’ parents who wish to bestow bilingual competence as a ‘gift’ upon their children. King and Fogle (2006) thus conclude, “family language policies for the promotion of additive bilingualism have become incorporated into mainstream parenting practices” (p. 695). Therefore, bilingual child-rearing is justified by the belief in the bilingual bonus as an advantageous parenting strategy.

The bilingual bonus is particularly relevant for the valorisation of bilingualism for families raising their children in majority language contexts. These advantages are presumed to only be accessible to bilinguals, and thus unavailable to monolinguals (Ellis, 2006). Parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing are influenced by the social contexts which they are socialising their children into, and the beliefs that valorise early childhood bilingualism within those contexts (Piller, 2001; Yates, Terraschke & Zielinski, 2012). Family language policy therefore becomes an important site where language ideologies and language practices intersect. As a micro-level social structure, the family unit has been identified “as a site in which language ideologies are both formed and enacted through caregiver–child interactions” (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008, p. 914). It is particularly within bi-and multilingual family units that dominant language ideologies influence attitudes and beliefs towards the value of bilingualism in general, and towards language practices for transmitting a language in particular. Therefore, FLP is primarily concerned with caregiver (mainly parental) language ideologies, beliefs and attitudes that inform their language-related child-rearing decisions, “thus reflecting broader societal attitudes and ideologies about both language(s) and parenting” (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008, p. 907). Such attitudes include cultural-specific beliefs of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ parenting (King & Fogle, 2006; Basta, 2010), and public discourses on ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ strategies to use in bilingual child-rearing. Consequently, providing the bilingual bonus has come to be considered a ‘good’ parenting strategy. Some studies argue that bilingual child-rearing has become part of middle-class parenting (Döpke, 1992; Basta, 2010; Doyle, 2013), thereby indicating that the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy among middle-class bilinguals.

Nevertheless, the belief in the bilingual bonus and bilingual parenting as ‘good’ parenting is often confronted with realities that make the implementation of bilingual parenting strategies challenging. As Schwartz (2010) points out, “the declared language ideology of one or both

parents does not necessarily coincide with the strategies followed consciously or unconsciously in language practice with children” (p. 177). This is particularly true in the case of minority language-speaking mothers raising children in an English-dominant society. For example, in her study of Japanese mothers in Britain, Okita (2002) found that mothers’ decisions to raise their children bilingually were often based around their desire to be able to communicate to the child in their native tongue, and around their motivation to maintain ties with their native country. Therefore, the emotional connection to their language influenced mothers’ language choices (see also Pavlenko, 2004). Nevertheless, Okita (2002, p. 105) found that mothers were often faced with a language choice dilemma because they were “primarily responsible for the decision” of how to raise their children bilingually. Due to the challenges associated with bilingual child-rearing, mothers’ initial patterns of language use were often modified over time, often towards an increased use of English. In contrast, Okita found that fathers’ approval of bilingualism for their children’s “personal intellectual, social and cultural development, or for future job prospects” (p. 106) was based on the underlying assumption that learning Japanese would come naturally to their children. However, bilingual child-rearing turned out to be hard work performed largely by mothers – even if it remained largely invisible to the fathers, extended family members and outside observers.

In summary, the family is a site where language ideologies are negotiated through parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing. Raising a child in two or more languages is often associated with providing the child with a bilingual bonus that is unavailable to monolingual peers. The benefits associated with bilingualism therefore valorise bilingual child-rearing decisions and position parents as ‘good’ caregivers who are providing their children with an advantage in life. Minority language-speaking mothers in intermarriages are often primarily responsible for implementing bilingual FLP strategies, and therefore responsible for imparting

the bilingual bonus. However, the work involved in bilingual child-rearing remains largely invisible work as transmission of the minority language is assumed to happen naturally.

2.5. Bilingual FLP strategies in the Australian context

The previous sections have shown that parents who wish to raise their children in more than one language are exposed to competing language ideologies; the monolingual mindset on the one hand, and the bilingual bonus on the other. Although these ideologies are contested, their presence also reinforces each other. As discussed in Section 2.3, the monolingual mindset within languages education creates the need for bilingual parenting within the home domain. Therefore, the importance of bilingual parenting becomes ideologically valorised through the bilingual bonus. Section 2.5 explores how the idea of successful bilingual parenting has become closely tied to specific bilingual FLP strategies. I focus on bilingual FLP strategies in the Australian context, paying particular attention to the OPOL strategy.

Most research on language policy and practice has focussed on the nation-state and educational levels (Spolsky, 2004); however, in the past decades, the focus has shifted to include additional domains such as the home, and to family language policy (Piller, 2001; Okita, 2002; King & Fogle, 2006, 2013; Schwartz, 2010). Research on FLP is a comparatively new field of investigation. It draws from the fields of language policy and child language acquisition, and focuses on language practices, and overt language planning within the family sphere. The bulk of studies in FLP have focussed on either the North American, or European contexts (see Schwartz, 2010 for a review of FLP studies of the period 1998 – 2008, or King & Fogle, 2013 for a research timeline of influential studies from 1965 – 2013). To the best of my knowledge, bilingual FLP studies in the Australian context are scarce (but see Saunders, 1980; Döpke, 1992; Takeuchi, 2006a, 2006b; Yates & Terraschke, 2013). Existing studies in the Australian context predominantly focus on intermarried couples who seek to apply the OPOL strategy. In this strategy, one parent speaks the minority language, while the other speaks the majority language

from birth (Romaine, 1995). Consequently, the child is expected to interact with each parent in a different language.

Döpke (1992) for instance investigated the effectiveness of the OPOL approach on six children growing up in German-English bilingual households. She found that those children whose parents were most consistent in applying their OPOL approach achieved the highest level of competency in both languages in their children. Takeuchi (2006a; 2006b) focussed on school-aged children (5-8 years old) and their minority language maintenance. Takeuchi conducted interviews and case studies with Japanese mothers married to non-Japanese Australian men. She found that mothers' consistency in their Japanese use contributed to children's home language choices. Yates and Terraschke (2013) report on thirteen immigrant mothers who live in exogamous relationships in Australia. This study focuses on the families' bilingual FLP decisions, and the impact older siblings and social networks have on language maintenance. The authors identified the dominance of English as a significant challenge to heritage language maintenance, arguing that immigrant families need to be supported in understanding the benefits of bilingualism and the "emotional as well as the practical functions" their languages have to offer (p. 123). Overall, these studies indicate that the effectiveness of the OPOL approach is related to each parent's consistent use of one language in parent-child interactions.

The OPOL strategy deserves particular mention as it is one of two commonly documented strategies across the research literature (see Romaine, 1995 for a comprehensive typology of bilingual acquisition and their associated strategies). The second dominant strategy is the 'home language versus community language' strategy (henceforth HL-vs-CL). In this situation, both parents speak the minority language to the child. The child is only exposed to the majority language outside the home, and usually not until preschool (Romaine, 1995). Piller (2001) suggests that these two strategies are the most recognised in the research literature, because of the "class-position of many researchers" (p. 77), which has resulted in the assumption among

mainstream parents and bilingual child-rearing guidebooks that these two strategies are the most effective. For example, in their guidebook, King and Mackey (2007, p. 108) write that OPOL is “often held as the gold standard in bilingual child-rearing” for mixed-language families. Nevertheless, the majority of early childhood bilingualism researchers argue that the OPOL “language situation appears to be neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition” for bilingual child-rearing (De Houwer, 2007, p. 420; see also King & Fogle, 2006). The aim of OPOL is to create an exclusively monolingual context for parent-child interactions, because switching between languages is regarded by its proponents as counterproductive to the child’s language acquisition. However, as Döpke (1998, p. 43) comments, researchers argue that language mixing is “a natural aspect of the communication of bilinguals”. Therefore, OPOL is deemed an “unnecessary restriction of the natural interaction” between multilinguals (p. 44). This strategy is further criticised for its prevalence among research on White middle-class parents (Döpke, 1998; Piller, 2001). Scholars thus present these families, and the strategies they implement, as the norm. In the Australian context, FLP studies have primarily focussed on urban, middle-class intercultural couples where one parent speaks the minority language. One exception is the following study: Saunders (1980) conducted a longitudinal study of his own Australia-born children growing up in a German-English household. In contrast to most intercultural parents, Saunders exclusively spoke his non-native language, German, to his children. Nevertheless, he also reports that persistence and perseverance were key to overcoming his children’s unwillingness to speak the minority language.

In summary, the dominance of OPOL and HL-vs-CL strategies in the research literature may create the perception that the acquisition of two or more languages is best achieved if parent-child interactions take place in monolingual contexts. Bilingual FLP studies in the Australian context have primarily focussed on families where one parent exclusively speaks the minority language. These studies suggest that due to the dominance of English in society, parents must

create the need for their children to use the minority language. Additionally, parents' consistency in language use is sometimes presented as an essential prerequisite for the effectiveness of the OPOL strategy. Nevertheless, this strategy has been criticised for its elitist and unrealistic approach to bilingual parent-child interaction.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ways in which language ideologies mediate the link between social structure and language use. Beliefs about language not only shape social organisation, but are also complex expressions of social issues. The focus then turned to the monolingual mindset which underpins Australian language policy and planning on national, institutional, and social group levels. On an institutional level, language-in-education policies do not reflect Australia's language demographics, thus devaluing LOTEs, particularly community languages. It was shown that this lack of consistent support for foreign and community languages within languages education, often results in a language shift in young bilinguals upon schooling. Consequently, the home domain has become increasingly important for language maintenance efforts among bilingual families. As a micro-social structure, the bilingual family has been identified by the literature as a site where ideologies, beliefs and attitudes about language are played out in parent-child interaction (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008). I then explored the ideological valorisation for bilingual child-rearing in predominantly monolingual societies. What I term the 'bilingual bonus' encompasses intellectual, cognitive, health, personal, and above all economic benefits that are believed to provide bilingual speakers with an advantage over monolingual peers. To achieve this advantage, parents adopt a bilingual child-rearing strategy in the home domain. By implementing bilingual FLP strategies, such as the widely disseminated OPOL approach, parents aim to promote additive bilingualism by creating a consistent 'double monolingual' (Heller, 2002) context in which each language is acquired. Bilingual child-rearing in the home domain is therefore influenced by two dominant, shifting

and contested language ideologies: first, the monolingual mindset that, on the one hand, creates the need to promote double monolingualism in the home domain, and, on the other hand, underpins bilingual child-rearing in an English-dominant society; second, the bilingual bonus that, contrary to the monolingual mindset, validates bilingual child-rearing practices. It was shown that in the research literature, it has been argued that this valorisation of bilingualism in English-dominant societies has led to bilingual parenting being incorporated into mainstream parenting practices as an expression of ‘good’ parenting (King & Fogle, 2006). The belief of particular bilingual parenting practices equating to ‘good’ parenting, whilst others are evaluated as ‘bad’ parenting, is in itself an ideological evaluation. The question arises how the above tensions between language ideologies influence parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing in the Australian context. Therefore, in the light of the dominance of the monolingual mindset, the question arises as to whether parental decisions on how to raise children bilingually in Australia are influenced by the prevailing monolingual mindset. Furthermore, the question arises as to whether, and how, the dominant bilingual FLP strategies described in the research literature and beliefs in the bilingual bonus have become disseminated.

In summary, a gap exists in our knowledge of the ways in which the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy specifically in the Australian context. Therefore, this study sets out to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How do parents talk about bilingual child-rearing in the Australian context?
 - a. Is the prevailing monolingual mindset apparent in parents’ talk about bilingualism, and if so, how?
 - b. Is the bilingual bonus apparent in parents’ talk about bilingualism, and if so, how?
- 2) How is bilingual child-rearing linked to the notion of ‘good’ parenting?

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 reviewed the relevant literature on language ideologies and bilingual FLP strategies, and identified a gap regarding the link between contested language ideologies that underlie bilingual parenting, and the notion of ‘good’ parenting in the Australian context. This chapter outlines the methodological considerations underlying the research designed to address this lacuna. The next section is concerned with the methodological approach, followed by the principles of data selection, and a description of the corpus. This includes a discussion of the limitations of the corpus. Lastly, the methods of data analysis will be presented.

3.2. Approach

FLP studies primarily adopt qualitative approaches such as sociolinguistic interviews and case studies (for a review of current FLP literature see Schwartz, 2010). This also includes interview-based studies (Tuominen, 1999; Okita, 2002; King & Fogle, 2006; Takeuchi, 2006a; Yates & Terraschke, 2013), questionnaire-based studies (Pavlenko, 2004; De Houwer, 2007), and mixed-approach studies that incorporate semi-structured interviews with periods of observation (Kirsch, 2012; Curdt-Christiansen, 2013; Palviainen & Boyd, 2013; Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015). These ethnographically-informed approaches are suitable to explore the negotiations of parents’ interactive practices (King & Logan-Terry, 2008) and the effectiveness of their bilingual FLP strategies (Döpke, 1992). However, this study focuses on an examination of the language ideologies that inform parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing. Therefore, naturally occurring data that has not been researcher-elicited is needed to explore how parents talk about bilingualism outside the context of a research study on bilingual parenting. To collect such data, this research draws on a corpus of publicly available conversations about bilingual child-rearing on an online parenting forum. Such conversations would be accessible to a wide

online audience that is primarily dedicated to the exchange of non-expert peer advice (Kouper, 2010). Therefore, these – mostly anonymous – conversations can be understood as a manifestation of public knowledge about bilingual parenting. Specifically, this study focuses on an online parenting forum as an environment to explore *how* parents talk about bilingual child-rearing, and the language ideologies that underlie parental advice on ‘good’ bilingual parenting.

3.3. Data collection

3.3.1. Principles of data selection

My research draws on a corpus of written, publicly available online data. Forum threads were extracted from one of Australia’s largest online parenting websites: essentialbaby.com.au. This website is owned and operated by one of Australia’s major media organisations, Fairfax Media, and taps into its network of media sites to inform their over 255,000 members on “the latest parenting news around the world” (Essential Baby, 2015). Such parenting news ranges from practical advice on how to set up a nursery for one’s baby, to the latest gossip about celebrity parents and their offspring. These articles and blogs are freely accessible, however the interactive forums – where parents can pose discussion questions to other parents – can only be accessed by registered members. Registration is free and user profiles can be customised to reveal more or less personal background information. Members can create an alias with which they can contribute to a variety of forums that cover a range of sub-topics within categories such as ‘Pregnancy’, ‘Babies’, or ‘Toddler & kids’, etc. These forums are not primarily concerned with language, nor are there any sub-categories concerning language in general, or bi-/multilingualism in particular. A key word search for ‘bilingualism’ and ‘multilingualism’, and alternative spellings such as ‘bi-lingual’, resulted in 15 relevant forum threads that were posted between 2007 and 2014 in categories such as: ‘Miscellaneous’, ‘24-36 Months’, or

‘What do you think’. These threads (see Table 1 for overview) all have in common that posters are seeking advice on how to raise children bilingually. The presence of these discussion topics on bilingual child-rearing indicates that parental concerns regarding language are indeed present, despite there being no designated sub-topic in which to pose language-specific questions, or in which to express concerns on language management within the family.

This site was chosen for three reasons: first, with over 255,000 members it is one of Australia’s largest online parenting forums. Forum discussions enjoy a broad audience. On average, each thread in my corpus has been viewed 992 times, and commented on an average of 18 times. In comparison, the top fifteen most recently active discussion threads in the past month (September 2015) have an average of 2,949 views, and 33 comments. This indicates that discussion threads may reach a wide audience, however this audience is not necessarily active in participating in these conversations. It also indicates that topics related to bilingual child-rearing are less popular than other topics on the site such as ‘Birth to 6 months’ or ‘Games’.

Secondly, this is a general forum that is not specialised in bi-or multilingualism, so members are largely non-experts, making it possible to analyse peer advice as opposed to expert advice. Researcher-generated data generally reflects the beliefs of parents with an above-average interest in bilingual child-rearing. In contrast, online data represents bottom-up discourses amongst parents who are more generally interested in raising their children bilingually in a predominantly English-speaking environment.

Lastly, an investigation of parental beliefs about bilingual child-rearing in a general parenting forum will reflect more widely popularised discourses within the wider public. The discussion in Chapter 2 has shown that FLP studies in the Australian context largely focus on minority language speakers in intercultural relationships. This study encompasses a broader audience, including both minority and majority language-speaking, largely middle-class parents who

participate in general parenting forums without a specific interest in bilingual parenting. The exploration of how these parents talk about bilingual child-rearing may therefore provide a broader perspective on the dominant language ideologies that underlie wider discourses related to bilingual parenting.

3.3.2. Description of the corpus

The corpus consists of a sample of 15 forum threads posted between 2007 and 2014, containing a total of 266 comments (see Table 1 for overview). The corpus comprises a total of 40,657 words, whereby initial forum questions total 2,626 words, and forum discussions total 38,031 words. On average, forum discussions were active for 2 to 3 days after the original post was published, with exception of thread 11 which was posted over the Christmas holiday period where comments were posted infrequently over a period of two months. Overall, this indicates that these forum members generally participate in active discussion threads that are relatively short lived.

The initial question in each thread was posted by parents who wish to raise their children bilingually. Original poster (henceforth OP) is the term used within essentialbaby.com.au forums for the initiator of a discussion thread. Within these threads, forum members have the option to respond to the OP's question in the open discussion thread, or they can use a 'snapback' function to reply to specific comments within posts. From the use of pronouns in comments it becomes apparent that all OPs identify as female. Some mothers are minority language speakers while others are Australian-English speakers who have either moved abroad, or are married to minority language-speaking men. Across the forum, participants predominantly refer to their partners and children using abbreviations. For example, DH refers to 'dear husband' (see List of Abbreviations and Conventions). At the time of posting, the OPs in this corpus are either mothers-to-be (threads 12, 14, 15), or mothers with children who are under two years of age and learning to speak (threads 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11). The remaining OPs

either do not specify their children's age, or describe their children as toddlers (threads 5, 6, 10, 13). Across the discussion threads, OPs and contributors generally do not mention which LOTEs they are raising their children in. Where those languages are identified, OPs mention the following: Chinese, Danish, Dutch, Hebrew, Hungarian, Norwegian, Spanish, and Turkish. Additional languages mentioned by contributors across the threads include Afrikaans, Albanian, Arabic, Cantonese, Croatian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Kiswahili, Korean, Macedonian, Mandarin, Samoan, Serbo-Croatian, Swedish, Swiss-German, Tongan, and Vietnamese.

Across the threads, OP mothers seem to be faced with similar bilingual child-rearing challenges and concerns. Generally, mothers are interested in others' experiences; how other parents are raising their children bilingually; whether they need to be concerned about language delay, or language confusion; and, when is the best time to introduce children to a second language, or to English. The majority of threads are therefore concerned with language-related parenting choices. For instance, thread 13 discusses challenges around increasing the exposure to Spanish, and thread 6 is concerned with whether English should be prioritised to avoid disadvantages upon schooling. These discussion threads therefore provide evidence of parents' underlying language ideologies that inform their decisions on bilingual child-rearing.

Table 1. Corpus of forum threads from *essentialbaby.com.au* (2007-2014)

Original Poster	Date posted	Original post topic	Comments/ Replies
OP1	March 26 2007	Raising a Bi-Lingual child	15
OP2	June 16 2007	...is the best way to raise your child bilingually?	16
OP3	October 14 2007	Bilingual families – can you tell me about your bilingual baby?	12
OP4	January 24 2008	Bi Lingual kids and speech development	11
OP5	May 16 2008	Bi-lingual	21
OP6	April 12 2009	Children of non English-speaking parents	41
OP7	October 14 2009	To deal with two languages any idea?	12
OP8	May 03 2010	Teaching baby 2 languages And tips, ideas, experience?	17
OP9	September 22 2010	Bi-lingual baby. Tell me your experiences.	15
OP10	June 04 2011	Bilingual toddler – when to start teaching English?	21
OP11	November 29 2011	Your bi-lingual baby Hints, Tips, Advice and Experience please	16
OP12	March 02 2012	Raising bi-lingual children do you do it? How and why?	32
OP13	May 10 2013	Bilingual and multilingual families how much time do your kids spend with each of their languages?	21
OP14	April 10 2014	Bilingual bub – any tips?	6
OP15	June 16 2014	Bilingual children	10

3.3.3. Limitations of the corpus

Public data has the advantage that it is readily available. However, the disadvantage of using public online sources is that, often, participants' "background or sociolinguistic information" (Nortier, 2008, p. 50) is unavailable except when explicitly mentioned within contributions. Member profiles on essentialbaby.com.au minimally provide members' gender and age (although some members choose not to disclose this information), and the number of posts they have contributed to, among other forum-related information. From the use of pronouns and the family descriptions within comments, it seems that with the exception of commenter (7.7), the posters are all female, and with the exception of two commenters (11.2 and 11.5), the posters are all married. The data therefore largely reflects how 'mainstream' mothers talk about bilingual parenting. Some contributions are more descriptive than others, and include more detail on a family's language ecology. Generally, families' actual language practices cannot accurately be deduced from online forum entries. However, the focus of this study lies on the language ideologies that underlie parental beliefs about bilingualism, and not on their actual language practices. For this purpose, the data offers adequate evidence of parental attitudes, desires, strategies and plans at that given point in time. Consequently, the data provides a snapshot of how parents are raising – or are planning to raise – their children bilingually and how they discursively construct bilingual parenting. From the descriptions within comments, it also becomes evident that some members are either Australian citizens, or have lived in Australia previously, and are now residing and raising their children overseas. Because issues related to maintaining English in a non-Anglophone country may be quite different from those faced by parents in Australia, only those comments that explicitly contribute to the discourse on raising children bilingually in the Australian context are considered for the analysis.

In summary, despite a lack of background information about contributors, an exploration of naturally occurring data on how mainstream parents talk about bilingualism in a general online

parenting forum promises to uncover widely held beliefs about bilingual child-rearing in an English-dominant context. A critical discourse analysis of online parenting forums therefore offers a pertinent lens through which influential dominant ideologies, attitudes and beliefs are made transparent. Such an analysis is valuable, as it provides insights into the social practices and (implicit) common knowledge that shape parental understanding of successful bilingual child-rearing.

3.4. Data analysis

My method of data analysis is a combination of thematic and critical discourse analysis, as such an analysis illuminates underlying language ideologies that inform parental decisions about bilingual child-rearing. I use CDA as the main theoretical framework to ground my understanding of parents' underlying language ideologies that inform their choice of language strategies in an English-dominant environment. As one aspect of CDA, I draw on thematic analysis as a deductive method to identify recurrent key topics emerging from the data related to the language ideologies and research questions set out in Chapter 2. I apply a deductive method that is focussed around predetermined themes because Pavlenko (2007) criticises an overreliance on reoccurring themes within an inductive analysis, as the researcher then tends to overlook what the data does not say. The unsaid can be equally relevant. Therefore, Pavlenko (2007, p. 167) stresses the need for analysts "to adopt a specific theoretical framework that would allow them to clarify the nature of their conceptual categories and to pinpoint the links between the recurrent themes and conceptual constructs". I am aware of this criticism related to a purely inductive approach, and have taken this into account for my analysis by combining thematic analysis with CDA as the main theoretical framework. The goal of thematic analysis is therefore to reduce qualitative data into representative themes in relation to the research questions.

CDA views discourse primarily as a social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Blommaert, 2005) and, as such, discourse is seen as “what transforms our environment into a socially and culturally meaningful one” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 4). In the literature, the linguistic situation in Australia is often described as being characterised by a monolingual mindset (Clyne, 2005; Hajek & Slaughter, 2015), where multilingualism and multiculturalism are promoted, yet their fostering is still hindered by monolingual ideologies. Therefore, the discursive practices of parents seeking to raise their children bilingually within this environment are informed and shaped by dominant discourses that in turn “influence such socially shared knowledge, attitudes and ideologies” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 259). Thus a comprehensive explanation and critique of the way in which these dominant discourses influence bottom-up discourse practices is at the core of CDA (van Dijk, 1993). The underlying language ideologies that shape how parents talk about raising children bilingually can be made visible via the three semiotic processes of iconisation, fractal recursivity and erasure (Irvine & Gal, 2000; see Section 2.2). By identifying these processes, I further illuminate how language ideologies, such as the monolingual mindset and the bilingual bonus, shape how parents talk about bilingual child-rearing, and inform their language choices in an English-dominant context. These processes therefore enable an examination of how bilingualism is understood as an index of ‘good’ parenting practices, and further illuminate bottom-up discourse practices.

CDA is defined “as fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifest in language” (Wodak, 2001, p. 2). The main objective of CDA is therefore not just to uncover and analyse social inequalities as demonstrated in discourse or language use, but to suggest measures to effectively influence change (van Dijk, 1993). For this study, identifying dominant discourses, and instances of intertextuality, may shed light on why parents give preference to certain bilingual FLP strategies over others, and how these decisions are shaped by underlying

language ideologies. ‘Intertextuality’ refers to the re-citation and recycling of pre-existing texts and meanings (Blommaert, 2005, 2010). Such texts may include advice literature, socially assumed general knowledge, discourses within popular media, or simply ‘what one has heard’ or been told by peers, family, or experts. Thus, as Bloor and Bloor (2007) argue, an intertextual analysis of discourse serves two functions within CDA:

- (1) it plays an important role in revealing speakers’ and writers’ strategies in reinforcing or re-formulating ideas and beliefs; and (2) it can reveal traces of the dominant ideology or evidence of ideological struggle and cultural change (p. 54).

Wodak (2001) writes that “an important perspective in CDA is that it is very rare for a text to be the work of any one person (...) texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance” (p. 11). Uncovering instances of intertextuality therefore illuminates wider discourses on bilingualism that have been incorporated into parents’ understanding of bilingual child-rearing.

3.5. Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach taken to collect and analyse a corpus of online discussion threads taken from the online parenting forum essentialbaby.com.au. Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 explained that this general Australian parenting forum was chosen because it allows for an analysis of publicly available data on parental beliefs on bilingualism and bilingual parenting in a context not specifically concerned with the acquisition of two languages in an English-dominant environment. Moreover, naturally occurring data that has not been researcher-generated allows for an in-depth analysis of bottom-up discourses among mainstream parents. In Section 3.3.1, the principles of data collection were outlined. A key word search in the online parenting forum served to identify fifteen threads posted between 2007 and 2014. An examination of the corpus in Section 3.3.2 showed that all OPs, and the majority of contributors, identify as married women, and mothers-to-be. The limitations of

using publicly available data, as outlined in Section 3.3.3, are accounted for and counteracted by the study's focus on how parents discursively construct bilingual parenting, as opposed to an investigation of their actual bilingual parenting practices. The dominant language ideologies that underlie parental beliefs about bilingualism and bilingual parenting are therefore made transparent by applying a CDA approach to data analysis. Section 3.4 described thematic analysis as one aspect of CDA that is guided by the research questions in Section 2.6. Such an analysis is valuable as it helps categorise emerging themes related to parental beliefs about bilingualism, and to relate these themes to the underlying language ideologies and semiotic processes that index bilingual parenting as a 'good' parenting practice.

4. Creating bilingual advantages via monolingual practices

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a descriptive analysis of the data collected from one of Australia's largest online parenting forums. Section 4.2 explores how parents talk about the initial challenges of bilingual child-rearing by referring to the long term benefits their children will obtain. Forum members reassure each other that the benefit of bilingualism outweighs any concerns about language delay or confusion. Section 4.3 presents the language-related parenting choices contributors discuss. Specifically, how parents talk about which languages to teach and when. Section 4.4 describes how parents talk about bilingual FLP strategies and the role of 'consistency' in parent-child interaction. This chapter concludes with a summary of the overall findings.

4.2. The bilingual bonus: Initial challenges and long term benefits

Forum threads on bilingual child-rearing primarily serve as a platform for parents to address their concerns and to seek advice on the challenges they are facing. Parents are particularly concerned whether the exposure to two or more languages will initially confuse the child, and consequently result in a speech delay. Parents often reassure one another that the difficulties of bilingual child-rearing – no matter how much of the language is passed on – are worth any concerns in the long run by alluding to social, cognitive, and academic advantages. The belief in the bilingual bonus is evident across the data, however bilingual advantages are often not stated explicitly, nor are they elaborated upon.

4.2.1. 'One of the best gifts'

Across the data, early childhood bilingualism is portrayed as being a 'wonderful gift', a 'fantastic asset' and an 'amazing skill' for life:

Oh, I think one of the best gifts a parent can give a child is another language. (6.7)

We really believe that we have given our children a gift, in being bilingual, it is so easy for DH and I, why would we not pass this knowledge onto our children. (6.25)

Early bilingual child-rearing is associated with giving the child a head start in acquiring an additional language, and a head start in life, thus implying the bilingual bonus. Posters consider bilingualism as one of the most significant and beneficial life skills a parent can impart to their children.

While the bilingual bonus is often implied, concrete examples of the benefits of bilingualism include greater opportunities for future employment overseas and higher education, as well as advantages in cognitive development. The most widely stated benefit refers to children's future careers. Parents seem to associate bilingual competency with economic and academic benefits that monolingual English speaking peers may not have access to:

It also provides extra opportunities to work in that country, to work with tourists or immigrants from that country, to do social, historical, political or cultural studies of that country and gives them advantages that many other Australian's don't have. (12.32)

Plus you never know when a language might be beneficial. You don't have to go and live in that country for it to help. There are advantages to studying a language for university entrance, there may be jobs where it's helpful and employers often regard bilingualism as an asset even if it's not actually required for the job. (12.14)

Here, bilingual competency is portrayed as an asset for job and higher education prospects both within Australia and abroad. It is also believed that language skills are an asset, even if they are not specifically required for a particular job. Other examples mention advantages in brain development and a delayed onset of degenerative brain conditions:

Apparently it's also been shown that bilingual people are less likely to suffer from dementia or other degenerative brain conditions in old age. (3.11)

There's research that shows many benefits to raising children with a second language; something about synapses developing faster and making it much easier to learn a third or subsequent language. (12.4)

These comments refer to vague intertextual knowledge about research findings on the cognitive advantages of bilingual individuals. The latter comment also alludes to the widespread belief that it is easier for young bilinguals to learn additional languages later in life. Therefore, parents also consider early childhood bilingualism as an asset for children's formal language learning in the Australian education system:

Personally, I found being bi-lingual always gave me an advantage over the other kids when it came to subjects like English as well as any languages that we were taught at school (...) (1.14)

Luckily my language is one of those that get taught at school, so she'll eventually reap some benefits from me teaching it to her! (OP14.6)

The latter comment suggests that the particular language involved is worth passing on, as it may later be useful to the child at school, and the mother's efforts will be rewarded in formal education.

Conversely, some parents feel they are unable to impart the 'gift' of bilingualism to their children, and, as a consequence, express shame and regret for not being able to offer them the opportunity to learn several languages within the home domain:

And shamefully I also haven't encouraged my husband or his family to shower my children in Italian. Then they'd have three languages. Ridiculous that I forego giving my children a gift for which others pay good money. (6.6)

DH really regrets not knowing more of his own language, especially now he has a child.

We will organise some language classes for DS, but it won't be the same as what you guys are offering your kids. (13.9)

These parents lament not investing more time and effort into a life skill that is seemingly free. Here, bilingualism is portrayed as a generic intellectual resource, rather than a linguistic resource in its own right. Teaching the second language later in life is associated with higher costs, particularly in monetary terms if parents decide to enrol their children in bilingual immersion programs, or language classes. This highlights the belief that the bilingual bonus is best acquired in the home domain.

While most posters implicitly or explicitly evaluate bilingualism as positive, there is one comment that suggests that the overall academic benefits have been overstated:

The overall benefits are a little debatable and have been exaggerated in the past (i.e your child will NOT be smarter than other children) but might have a better appreciation of the way language works especially if the languages are very different from each other and this might translate to easier language learning. (6.11)

This poster seems to agree that future language learning may be facilitated by early knowledge of a second language, however she is overall sceptical of the extent of the bilingual bonus.

In summary, parents frame bilingual child-rearing as a gift they may impart to their children. Mostly, the qualities of the 'gift' are left unspecified. Where specific benefits of bilingualism are mentioned, they relate to academic advantages for language learning at school and for the children's future careers. Additionally, research regarding advantages in cognitive development is alluded to. Overall, the benefits of bilingualism are largely implied, but bilingualism in general is considered to be a highly valuable asset.

4.2.2. ‘They may take a little longer to speak’

For some posters, the bilingual benefit is overshadowed by concerns about possible linguistic challenges caused by the initial exposure to two languages. Some parents subscribe to the view that bilingual children are more likely to experience speech and/or language delay than children who are only exposed to one language. The following comments are representative of others:

The only down side is that they may take a little longer to speak, but once they do they will have the benefit of being bilingual. I'd say go for it -the long term gains are worth the minor speech delay. (2.6)

Maybe speech and language development is a bit slower but not by a great deal and the benefits of knowing more than one language far outweighs the disadvantages in delayed or confused speech. (7.12)

These parents stress that potential speech and/or language delay is compensated for by the overall benefits associated with bilingualism. Alongside speech delay, language confusion is another parental concern:

I was concerned that my kids may find it hard and the two may confuse or delay them..(no evidence of this thus far), however I really think the pros of having two languages (or more!) far outweigh any cons in the long run. (4.10)

Although they may have some initial delays and some confusion, this very quickly resolves itself and is in no way a reason not to do something that is so beneficial. (6.28)

From these comments, it seems that posters may accept that language delay and confusion are expected side effects of bilingual parenting. However, some contributors comment on a lack of scientific evidence of linguistic disadvantages experienced by bilingual children:

DH and I have done a lot of research on raising multilingual children and based on that (as well as our own experience and those of friends with multilingual children), I really

don't subscribe to the widely-voiced view that children with more than one language routinely experience delays in speech. (4.5)

Try not to buy into some of the myths that are out there about multilingual children - there's actually no research to show that children who speak more than one language begin talking later than other children. (2.11)

As a speech pathologist, I have always advised parents to do exactly what you are already doing – (...) If there is a true 'delay' in their language development you will find it across both languages, not just one. (1.3)

By referring to their own expert, or semi-expert knowledge, these parents position themselves as well-informed advisors. Further posters draw on personal experience to demonstrate that parental fears are unfounded:

I saw my nephew just as he turned 2 (for the first time since he was 4m) and OMG his vocabulary and sentence structure was amazing (my DS will be nothing like that in one language by 2). So as PP have said, late/early talking with 2 languages will depend on the child. (2.16)

This mother compares her bilingual nephew's speech/language development to that of her monolingual son's, thus drawing on personal experience to further support previous posters' claims that speech/language delay is rather child dependant.

Across the data, there are two main suggestions in reaction to parental concerns towards language confusion and speech delay: on the one hand, parents advise not to worry too much and to 'go with the flow'; on the other hand, contributors advise each other to follow a systematic bilingual FLP strategy. The latter is further explored in Section 4.4.1. The former advice is based on the assumption that children are particularly apt at acquiring languages. Children are therefore portrayed as 'sponges', a common metaphor used to describe their ability

to learn an abundance of new skills, particularly languages. The following is representative of similar comments:

My one major piece of advice would be to relax and go with the flow. Children are amazing in their ability to soak up language like sponges and having another language is a gift that your DS will have for life. (4.5)

A child that is good at one language will have no trouble mastering a few others. And they learn them quickly, too, if given the right support. They're not sponges for nothing. (8.17)

The possibility of initial delays in children's linguistic development is justified by the belief that they are processing two languages simultaneously. Parents reassure each other that ultimately, any negative impacts on children's linguistic development are outweighed by the benefits associated with bilingualism.

Overall, across my corpus, early childhood bilingualism is portrayed as a valuable gift. When it comes to the bilingual bonus, specific languages are rarely identified; bilingualism is portrayed as a generic life skill that results in equally generic advantages over monolingual peers. Even so, the benefits of bilingualism remain vague and implicit. Often, parents express concerns regarding speech and/or language delay and confusion. In order to counteract these initial challenges, parents encourage each other to either 'go with the flow' and trust that children will 'soak up' the languages, or they insist on a strict language division (this is further explored in Section 4.4.1). Some parents believe that speech/and or language delay may occur as a result of bilingual language acquisition, whilst others argue that language impairments have been proven to be child dependent. Overall, the consensus is that, in the long run, the challenges associated with bilingual child-rearing will ultimately be outweighed by the benefits of bilingualism.

4.3. Making language-related choices

This section explores the choices parents make on raising children bilingually in the Australian context. The main focus lies in how parents talk about *which* languages to teach and *when*. More specifically, the focus lies on how parents make the decision to raise their children as simultaneous or consecutive bilinguals.

4.3.1. ‘The beauty of introducing languages so early’

Across the data, parenting choices vary around when to introduce which language. This section is concerned with the belief in ‘the earlier, the better’, and whether the majority language, English, should be introduced before schooling. Discussion thread 6 particularly exemplifies parental debates about language-related parenting choices. The discussion is initiated by mother OP6 who explains that she and her husband plan to teach their son English first:

DH is from a non-English speaking country. He speaks English fluently and we decided that DS' first language should be English, as he is living and will go to school in Australia. He will learn his father's language when he is a little older, maybe 5. Everyone says now is a good time for him to learn both languages, which I agree with, but I can't help thinking it would be better for him to get English "under his belt" first (OP6)

Her approach contrasts with that of her family friend, who is raising her daughter solely in the minority language until schooling:

I think the mother is being a bit selfish really, and her DD will have trouble when she starts school. DH disagrees - he says she will learn English at school and doesn't need to know it before then. (...) I think she will be disadvantaged though, as the other kids at school will already be speaking English from the start, and she won't. (OP6)

Mother OP6's reasoning for her negative evaluation appears to be based on the fear that her son will experience social and academic disadvantages at school if he has not mastered English

first. OP6 receives considerable backlash from the online community, not only for criticising her friend's bilingual child-rearing approach, but also for her own bilingual FLP strategy. The community's criticism seems to be based on the common belief that 'earlier is better'. This belief is voiced across the data:

With any language learning, the younger, the better. (10.13)

The beauty of introducing languages so early on in children is that they pick them up so easily. (4.11)

Parents agree with each other that children are particularly apt at learning languages at a young age. Therefore, raising children in one language first, and introducing the other later, is not perceived as an appropriate bilingual child-rearing strategy for successful bilingual child-rearing:

You can do what you like and make your own choices regarding your child, but let me encourage you to raise [him] bilingual. It really won't hurt [him], there is lots of evidence and research to prove this (so you know, I have a degree in Early Childhood Education and studied this at Uni...) Then you can encourage your friend to do the same. Do some research yourself so you can show her the benefits of her child learning 2 languages together. (6.5)

You have made the exact same choice as your friend, to deprive a child of their best opportunity to learn a second language. They will still be good if they learn at 5 (my father did it), but it is harder for them. If you grow up with two, there is no confusion, but sometimes there is when it is picked up later. (6.10)

There has been study after study showing that children who are raised bilingually from birth do better academically than their monolingual peers. You are doing your child a disservice by not offering the opportunity to have two true first languages. (6.28)

These comments suggests that being raised bilingually is defined as learning two monolingual varieties simultaneously. Parents who take an alternative approach are thereby seen as denying their children the opportunity to ‘have two true first languages’. OP6 and her friend’s approach are therefore evaluated as inappropriate bilingual child-rearing strategies, as the bilingual bonus does not seem to be associated with their approaches. The latter comment refers to implicit research findings (‘study after study’) to exemplify the belief that bilinguals are academically advantaged to their peers. Further comments also refer to general research findings on ‘the earlier, the better’ using openings such as ‘I have read’, ‘I have been told’ or ‘it is recommended’. ‘The earlier, the better’ seems to be considered by some contributors as scientific fact:

More exposure to both languages early will maximise your child's ability to be fluent in both. Language acquisition theorists seem to agree on an early critical period, your child is smack bang in this period of his life. (6.37)

These parents further suggest that native-like proficiency, evidenced in fluency, is only achievable if both languages are learnt simultaneously from an early age. The belief in ‘nativism’ is therefore presented as scientific fact. This negative evaluation of consecutive bilingualism is not uncommon (Piller, 2001), as parents primarily encourage each other to raise their children as simultaneous bilinguals through the OPOL or HL-vs-CL approaches:

The earlier the better and waiting till 5 is counter-productive. I understand your concern about English not being mastered, but the best way to do this is to ensure one member of the family always speaks in English (ie you) while those that have the other language, always speak that language with your DS. (6.21)

In the end, OP6 rejects contributors’ advice and the so-called expert knowledge they draw on. She maintains that her child will learn some English first, as she believes that some exposure to the language of instruction is imperative before schooling:

I still think it's best for children (or my child, anyway) to learn some English before going to an English speaking school (with or without a foreign language at the same time). No amount of "expert" opinion is going to change my mind on that - sorry. Obviously if others want to do something different, that's up to them. (OP6.40)

In summary, it appears that contributors' discussions around language-related parenting choices are influenced by tensions between language ideologies: on the one hand, parents in favour of 'the earlier, the better' offer intertextual references to support their criticism of OP6 and her friend's approaches. Their references suggest that public knowledge on bilingual child-rearing has incorporated the belief in 'the earlier, the better' and in 'nativism' as validation to implement OPOL to ensure the simultaneous exposure to two languages from an early age. These parents seem to assume that native-like proficiency in both languages is only possible under these circumstances, thus rendering the sociolinguistic and socioeconomic situations within families invisible; on the other hand, other parents, although in favour of bilingualism, are concerned about the disadvantages involved in starting school without English language competency.

4.3.2. 'I'm not going to make the same mistake'

Parents also talk about bilingual child-rearing in terms of the mistakes others, or they themselves make or have made. Particularly so-called 'immigrant' parents are cautioned by contributors to teach their children their native language first, as opposed to making the mistake of passing on 'broken English':

Children have to learn at least 1 language well and there have been big problems with well intentioned immigrants who tried to raise their children to speak only English without being able to speak it well themselves. This is very bad for the children's language development and they would have done better to teach them their own 'mother

tongue' and left English for school (but they of course don't know this, so it isn't really their fault). (6.5)

'Immigrant' parents seem to be defined as having a lack of English proficiency on the one hand, and a lack of knowledge about bilingual child-rearing on the other. Across the data, children from immigrant families who have little or no exposure to English are perceived as being at a disadvantage compared to children of families who have had *some* exposure to English:

I agree that children pick up English quickly once in school, but they cannot be at the same level as children who have had five years of English speaking. I see it every day at work. I am only speaking about families that ONLY speak another language and surround themselves who only speak that language. Those families that surround themselves in English at times, along with nurturing their home language are a different story. (6.14)

This contributor differentiates between children with little to no, and children with some exposure to English, arguing that the latter group will face fewer linguistic challenges upon schooling. As shown in Section 4.3.1, in my corpus, migrant parents' bilingual child-rearing strategies appear to be primarily evaluated negatively:

I think what often happens with common community languages (such as Turkish) with a relatively recent migrant population (ok, 35 years of Turks in Australia, but still), that using the language at home is a sign of 'old' ways, and the 'old' culture, and children are keen to look cool and use the cool language (English) at school. I think this is particularly exaggerated if their entry to school is complicated by needing to learn English, and if the parents' behaviour suggest that the community language is something private, to be concealed or kept for home. The kids we know who spoke Turkish at home and English at school quickly lost Turkish. Their parents still speak to them in Turkish but they always reply in English and their Turkish is terrible. (10.11)

In the discourse around migrant parents' mistakes, specific languages are rarely mentioned. The above comment is an exception. This contributor suggests that children's 'terrible' Turkish language skills result from their parents' inappropriate bilingual FLP strategy. She suggests that the HL-vs-CL bilingual FLP may create a language division that is detrimental to children's motivation to speak both languages. Additional comments also allude to potential difficulties children may encounter when not given the opportunity to learn English before schooling:

I grew up in a high ethnic neighbourhood and saw all too many kids attending special ESL (english as a second language) classes at school and suffering setbacks due to their parents not speaking any English at home. My own parents used to speak our mother tongue at home all the time until we were at school when they decided that they were in Australia now and spoke to the children in English and each other in native tongue. But I am sad now because this meant that I cant speak their language more than a few words. (And I can't teach my own DS!) (5.2)

This comment appears to be caught between the monolingual mindset and the bilingual bonus. On the one hand, this poster suggests that children with no English exposure prior to schooling are at a disadvantage, on the other hand, however, she suggests that her own parents' decision to switch to English has resulted in her no longer being able to speak their language, nor can she pass it on to her son. Across my data, there is a widespread discourse about immigrants' language-related parenting mistakes. This comment exemplifies how their desire to learn English and to assimilate is in conflict with the desire to maintain the home language.

Across the data, the mistakes parents discuss are all influenced by the dominance of English. One area of mistake-making, as perceived by parents, involves the use of English for the facilitation of social inclusion:

I made the mistake of only teaching my daughter turkish. i kept telling dh to talk in turkish to her while we always speak english to each other recently ive noticed she cant

verbally communicate with other kids at parks. so now we are speaking/teaching both to her (...) im not going to make the same mistake with [daughter] #2 (1.11)

Some parents are concerned that no English knowledge prior to schooling will affect their children's ability to socialise with monolingual English speaking peers. This fear seems to contribute to the re-evaluation of some parents' language choices. The above mother regrets not exposing her child sooner to English. In contrast, another poster regrets not ensuring that her eldest son had maximum exposure to the minority language:

I only speak chinese to my twins. (...) I know they will learn eng sooner or later (...) I made the mistake with my ds1 and I spoke to him in eng and chinese, more so eng without even realizing it and now at 6y.o, he doesn't really know chinese. Even if he can understand, he refuses to speak chinese. (11.16)

The mother attributes her son's lack of Chinese proficiency to her initial language choices. With her younger children, she tries to ensure more Chinese input, because English may be acquired elsewhere. Other mothers also feel their initial language choices have been challenged by the dominance of English:

We moved to Australia when DS was 2.5 years old. I have always tried my very best to only speak Dutch to DS but believe me, it is very hard to keep it up sometimes. Or maybe I just failed LOL. It is hard because over here I speak English to everyone (naturally) and DS knows that. (...) It is hard for me to keep it up all the time, eg. when DS is being naughty in the shops and I reprimand him in Dutch, then people around me look at me as if I'm an alien and as if I let him get away with it?? Whereas if I reprimand him in English, at least they know what I'm doing. (...) I'm pregnant now, and with the next child I will try my very best again, and in the end that's all you can do. (2.3)

This mother mentions a sense of failure for not using the minority language consistently due to the dominance of English in interaction with others, and in public. This mother is also worried

about being perceived as a 'bad' parent for publicly disciplining her son in Dutch. The mothers in all three previous comments reposition themselves as 'good' parents by emphasising that they will, or have, put more effort into making the 'right' language choices with their younger children.

In summary, it appears that the migrant parents' choices are condemned as inappropriate regardless of whether these parents expose their children to English or not. Migrant parents are primarily framed as being deficient in English, and as being unaware of appropriate bilingual FLP strategies to employ. Overall, the mistakes that forum members discuss are primarily influenced by the dominance of English: on the one hand, parents express regret for not providing enough language exposure to English so their children can socialise with their peers; on the other hand, parents express regret for not providing enough language exposure in the minority language to ensure their children learn their language before schooling. By confessing to their language choice mistakes, parents position themselves as 'good' parents who have learnt from their parenting errors, and who strive to increase their bilingual parenting efforts with their younger children.

4.3.3. 'I don't see the point'

This section is concerned with parents who choose not to raise their children bilingually in the Australian context. The focus lies on thread 12, the only thread in which contributors discuss why they plan to raise their children monolingually. OP12 seeks advice from the online community asking how other families reached a decision on which languages to teach:

DH doesn't feel that he wants to teach our child/ren his second language. It is only spoken within his home country which is far away from here. Our child/ren would have limited opportunity to speak it with anyone but him. (...) It's really looking like we'll end up with English only in our household, but I just want to make sure that is the right decision for us and for them. (OP12)

Across this thread, there are only a few parents who are also choosing not to pass on their language:

My family is bilingual, we originate from another country, however both my children will be speaking English only. I don't see the point in teaching them a language they will never use here in Australia. We are not returning to our country, so there is no need for it. (12.8)

This poster argues that there will be little opportunity for her children to use the language within or beyond the Australian context, thus devaluing her language as being useless outside her country. Parents who choose not to raise their children bilingually appear influenced by the underlying monolingual mindset that devalues other languages and renders them invisible. However, one contributor argues in favour of the minority language despite the monolingual mindset:

The language is virtually useless outside his home country but I don't see that as a reason not to teach DS something that is part of his heritage. (12.24)

This poster also evaluates the LOTE as being worthless in the Australian context, however it is nonetheless considered an important component of her son's cultural identity. This poster is one of only two contributors in thread 12 who mentions the connection between language and identity. Across the data, none of the parents explain their language-related parenting choices in relation to their own linguistic identities. Cultural and linguistic identity therefore do not seem to be important factors.

Across thread 12, the majority of contributions express sympathy towards OP12's husband's point of view. One contributor also explains to OP12 that the challenge of raising children bilingually lies in parental attitudes towards promoting the minority language:

If they don't really care one way or the other, the child will only speak the majority language. If they really want it, but believe it's sort of impossible, or that monolingualism is inevitable, then it will be. (12.14)

This data appears to support the minority language-speaking father's attitude – if the second language will not be useful, why try to teach it. Nevertheless, the majority of contributors encourage the family to 'give it a go':

I'm of the view that no harm can come from teaching children a second language, and any extra language skills they have are an advantage, so why not try it? (12.15)

This comment implies that providing children with additional language skills, enriches them in terms of the associated benefits of languages.

Overall, those parents who decide against bilingual child-raising, base their decision on the perceived usefulness of their language within Australia. Few parents express the desire to transmit their cultural identity. Some parents argue that they do not plan to return to their country of origin, so children would only have limited opportunities to use the language. Commenters typically validate these parents' positions, particularly if the mother, as the primary caregiver, is not the minority speaker. Even so, some contributors argue in favour of providing even minimal additional language skills, as this is first and foremost believed to enrich the child's development.

In summary, Section 4.3 has explored the choices parents make on which languages to teach, and when to teach them. The majority of parents seem to agree that children need to be exposed to both languages from an early age to ensure bilingual competency later in life. Consecutive bilingualism therefore appears to be associated with social, linguistic and academic disadvantages. This is particularly evident in contributors' negative evaluation of immigrant parents' bilingual child-rearing decisions. The consensus appears to be that 'good' parents, who

are proficient in English, expose their children to some English in early childhood to ensure that children experience fewer difficulties upon schooling. Yet, other contributors express regrets for not fostering the minority language more. Therefore, parents reassess their language choices if they perceive that their child is either struggling to communicate with peers in English, or refusing to use the minority language. Overall, OPOL appears to be associated with the positive evaluation of the ‘the earlier, the better’ argument, whereas the HL-vs-CL strategy seems to be associated with a detrimental language divide that may work towards the child choosing English over the minority language. Across the data, very few posters mention cultural identity as a reason to pass on their language. Lastly, there is a small group of parents that have decided to raise their children as monolingual English speakers. Such decisions are the clearest expression of the monolingual mindset and contrasts with other posters’ recommendation to teach their children *some* of their language, as even minimal second language skills are believed to enrich children.

4.4. Bilingual child-rearing strategies and realities

Across the data, it is widely agreed upon that bilingual language skills, and the bilingual benefit can only be obtained if parents make a conscious effort to teach their children two languages from an early age. Such efforts are believed to be realised only by strictly following a bilingual FLP strategy. In their initial discussion posts, OPs largely seek advice on whether their current strategies are appropriate. The following OP comments are representative of others:

I am keen to know how your family goes about speaking another language and what is recommended by the experts! IE Do you mix English and the other language or is this bad? Should I just stick to English only as it is not my native language? (OP2)

So I guess my question is if we are confusing our boy? - or will it effect him somehow??

I just really want him to understand and speak Danish - so should I be really hardcore and ONLY speak Danish to him?? (OP8)

Respondents to these questions seem to stress that the key to bilingual child-rearing is to employ a consistent bilingual FLP strategy. However, mothers admit that being consistent is not as easy as it seems, and fathers are often blamed for inconsistent parent-child interactions in the minority language, particularly if they are not the primary caregivers. This section explores how parents talk about bilingual FLP strategies, and the role of ‘consistency’ in bilingual child-rearing.

4.4.1. ‘The key is consistency’

Across the data, variations of the phrase ‘the key is consistency’ are the prevalent expressions that parents use to stress the importance of a systematic bilingual child-rearing approach:

It seems the key is to be consistent and not panic if it looks like it's taking a while! (3.7)

From what I've heard, consistency is the key. If you're the English speaker, you should always speak English with your daughter (don't dip in and out of English and Norwegian when you talk to her), and your partner should always speak Norwegian with her. (9.4)

The ‘key’ to bilingual child-rearing is believed to lie in the consistent use of one language by one person in parent-child interactions. The latter comment also exemplifies the belief that even if one caregiver is bilingual, parents should nonetheless use only one language. Specifically, contributors posit that if the bilingual parent is perceived as being less proficient in the LOTE, then they should not speak this language in parent-child interactions so as not to confuse the child:

The approach we've taken is that my wife and I speak English to our children and their maternal grandmother speaks Spanish to them. The key is consistency - ensuring that the language from a parent or guardian remains the same. We chose not to have my wife speak Spanish to our children because her Spanish isn't fantastic and we thought

it might confuse our children if their mother is speaking Spanish to them and their father is speaking English to them. (7.7)

This comment was posted by the only self-identified father in the forum threads. Although he voices the belief that caregivers must be consistent in their bilingual FLP strategy, he fears that his child will be confused if both parents speak a different language. Despite this fear, Spanish input from his mother-in-law does not seem to be perceived as being problematic, nor potentially confusing. Overall, the focus lies on the management of language division by each parent:

I have been told that each parent should speak their respective mother tongue to their child in order for the child to be bi-lingual. We are expecting our first and I will speak English and my husband will speak Turkish. (...) Stick to what you are doing. It seems to be what the professionals would recommend. (8.7)

As a speech pathologist, I have always advised parents to do exactly what you are already doing - each parent only speak one language to the child, to help the child by providing a clear 'division' between the languages. (1.3)

Here, child language acquisition professionals are referenced to justify the strict separation of languages by person, place or context. The most frequently mentioned strategies are the OPOL and HL-vs-CL strategies:

I'm not expert either but I've done a fair bit of reading about bilingualism, since we are raising bilingual kids. The key is that you be consistent. The "one parent one language" model is common because so many families are bilingual because the parents speak different native languages. But there are other models, and the "we speak one language at home and the other outside the home" one is, I understand, the next most commonly used one. (10.8)

We are not bilingual but I went to a talk by our local Speech Therapists re: Helping Toddlers to Talk & they gave advice on this topic. They said you do need to have rules but you can switch between the 2 languages. The rules can be:

- Only speak your native language at home & let children learn English in the community.
- One parent speaks each language to child.
- Speak only native language at home, English when out.
- Speak native language at set time of the day for example you could speak your language to the child when you are home alone but switch to English when your partner is home.

Apparently kids adapt really easily but they have to 'know' what language they're speaking hence the 'rules'. Problems arise if you switch back & forward & the child gets confused. (14.3)

The latter contribution to the forum reiterates bilingual child-rearing 'rules' that echo common bilingual FLP strategies such as HL-vs-CL, and OPOL. This parent discloses that she is not raising bilingual children, nor is she bilingual herself. Her comment alludes to the belief that children easily adapt to the bilingual FLP strategy, as long as parents do not confuse their children by switching between languages. Overall, references to expert knowledge exemplify how the mixing of two languages is not accepted in wider discourses about bilingual child-rearing. Across the data, language mixing is therefore discouraged:

I think the key is consistency. You can't mix in english with the other language or vice-versa. You speak to your child in one language at a time and you can't go wrong. (4.8)

[Mixing both languages with the children] is actually not necessarily the best thing to do, it's usually easier for them if they have the constancy and parents not switching back and forth between 2 languages. Our kids have no problem with english whatsoever and

no accent at all either, they picked it up from everywhere else without a problem (of course we also speak english at home if we have visitors) (7.4)

Our 5 year old speaks perfect Spanish and English, with the correct accents without mixing the languages. Up to last year, she was still mixing a bit, or if she didn't know the Spanish word, she would just say it in English with Spanish accent! LOL! (8.4)

Parents appear to believe that a lack of language mixing and accent are the main indicators of bilingual proficiency. The above comments suggest that successful bilingualism is reflected in a lack of 'accent', which in turn implies monolingual competencies in each language. Language mixing and a non-native accent are therefore deemed detrimental for the classification of a bilingual speaker.

Due to the dominance of 'consistent' bilingual FLP strategies across the data, alternative approaches that deviate from the norm are rejected by contributors. One mother is separating her languages primarily by time:

I am the one spending most time with our 9.5 months DS, my approach is speak to him in English for a week, and then my language in the second week and so. When DH/someone else is around, i will speak English, so that they can understand. However, DH will only speak his language to him regardless whether i'm there (i can't speak and don't understand DH's language) as he is only get little time with DS and he wishes DS can master in his language. (8.14)

Both parents appear to be implementing different bilingual FLP strategies. In reaction to this, one contributor recommends that the family implement the OPOL approach, arguing English will take care of itself once the child is exposed to the wider community:

We are raising our kids bilingual too, one parent/one language. That's the way it seems to be recommended these days, consistency is key. With that in mind, [poster 8.14], I wouldn't go down that path. You're better off keeping your language separate, as in you

... speak only it to him, while your husband uses his own language - you obviously speak English together? That will be enough for the child to learn that eventually too, especially since English is the dominant language around him elsewhere too. (8.17)

This poster suggests OPOL as a more appropriate bilingual FLP strategy, primarily due to this strategy's dominance across bilingual child-rearing discourses.

In summary, the majority of contributors believe that a systematic division of languages in parent-child interaction is the key to successful bilingual child-rearing. Parents also appear to believe that bilingual competency is reflected in a lack of accent and language mixing, and that language confusion is counteracted by a consistent approach. OPOL is by far the most frequently mentioned bilingual FLP strategy, as it is strongly associated with 'consistency' and the strict separation of both languages in parent-child interaction. As a result, bilingual language acquisition is believed to be realised successfully via monolingual practices. Alternative approaches are generally dismissed.

4.4.2. 'I often catch DP speaking English'

Despite the fact that the majority of contributors describe consistency as the key to successful bilingual child-rearing, parents may not be able to invest the amount of 'hard work' required, and several contributors voice their frustrations over the difficulties associated with maintaining consistent language practices. When some posters perceive their bilingual FLP strategies as failing, they often blame their partners' inconsistent use of the minority language:

DP is Norwegian and I am Australian, we do one parent one language. Although I often catch DP speaking English with DD which really annoys me as her Norwegian has really slipped lately. He says he always forgets to speak Norwegian which I find really strange since it's his mother tongue. (13.4)

Elsewhere in the data the same mother remarks:

I also speak Norwegian (almost fluent), but we decided that i should stick to English and DP stick to His. (OP9.2)

As the designated majority language speaker, this poster blames her husband, as the designated minority language speaker, for not adhering to their bilingual FLP strategy. In response to this mother's frustration another contributor writes:

It took my DH a good couple of years to learn to be consistent in speaking Spanish with DD1. It's hard to do, because he tends to respond in English when she speaks to him in English. He's better at it now, though not 100%. Like you, I used to "catch him out" speaking English to her and have to remind him to switch them into Spanish. (13.5)

The prevalence of English in parent-child interactions appears to affect fathers' minority language use. Therefore, as the designated English speakers, the above mothers feel additional responsibility for the implementation of their bilingual FLP. These posters are not alone in experiencing frustrations caused by their husbands' forgetfulness:

DH is supposed to speak always in Hungarian to our sons but sometimes doesn't remember. (...) At a young age I try to do all the "teaching" of language in Hungarian (...) as that is my level of Hungarian. I've also got the "motherly" type commands down pat in Hungarian like "come here" and "don't touch that" or "lunch is ready" etc that I repeat multiple times a day. Other than that I speak 90% of the time to them in English. (2.9)

By providing repetitive input in Hungarian, this majority language-speaking mother tries to reinforce and promote the presence of the minority language in the home domain. In contrast to the findings in Section 4.4.1, the use of two languages by one person is not evaluated negatively by the online community. Here, the majority language-speaking mother's use of the minority language appears to be valued as language enrichment. The designated minority language-speaking parents, too, encounter implementation problems, however, they continue

to persist using OPOL. This persistence suggests that the monolingual mindset is entrenched in these parents' bilingual child-rearing practices. Some contributors therefore feel that they are making more of an effort than their partners:

My DH is German and doesn't speak Dutch. He sometimes does speak German to DS, but to be honest I think he can't be bothered to do it consistently, which is a shame. I will get some more books and surf the net for more info. Until then I'll keep it up the way I am doing things. So I speak Dutch to DS and English to DH. I will also have to remember to speak Dutch to him in front of English speaking people as that is where I slip up! (5.15)

Despite persisting with OPOL in the home domain, the prevalence of English in the public domain compels this mother to accommodate her language use towards English (as with poster 2.3 in Section 4.3.2). The poster further hopes to help encourage German, however she seems unsure how to do so, and appears to accept her husband's reluctance. In contrast, another contributor hopes that her husband may accommodate his language practices when confronted as being a 'bad' bilingual parent:

I want this for DS and was what we had planned before he came along. If only DH would speak his native language to him more. Maybe when his parents visit in a couple of weeks and DS has no idea what they are saying to him, then maybe he'll feel guilty. (1.4)

The use of guilt is considered a possible solution to force her husband to use his language more often. Across the data, it appears that whenever parents encounter issues with their bilingual FLP strategy, the strategy itself is not reconsidered.

In summary, those posters who voice frustrations associated with a lack of consistency in their bilingual child-rearing strategies often blame the inconsistency on their partners, who are the designated minority language speakers. Overall, these contributors express a desire to raise their

children bilingually, and take measures to enrich the minority language by encouraging forgetful partners to speak their language, contributing to language exposure, or providing additional resources. Overall, when encountering difficulties with their bilingual FLP strategy, parents feel their circumstances are primarily to blame.

4.5. Summary

This chapter has explored discourses about bilingual child-rearing in an Australian online parenting forum that is not specifically devoted to bilingualism. In Section 4.2, I discussed how parents value bilingualism as a generic skill that is constructed as a gift to impart to their children. However, the advantages associated with bilingualism often remain vague and implicit; where they are specified they relate to academic or economic gain. Contributors encourage each other to pursue bilingual child-rearing primarily for the bilingual bonus, thus indexing bilingual parenting as ‘good’ parenting, despite fears and concerns related to language delay and confusion.

In Section 4.3, the analysis shifted to parents’ language-related choices. The majority of parents argue in favour of teaching both languages simultaneously by implementing OPOL. ‘The earlier, the better’ is often presented as scientific fact, and associated with the acquisition of native-like proficiency. However, parents disagree on the appropriate amount of exposure to English, and bilingual parenting mistakes are primarily attributed to consequences of English dominance in the wider society.

Lastly, the analysis in Section 4.4 found that, among this online community, there is a widespread belief that the ‘key’ to bilingual child-rearing is to ensure the consistent division of languages in parent-child interactions. Across the data, there is only one counter-example that recommends ‘going with the flow’, as opposed to strict language division. However, this English-speaker is raising her children in Switzerland. In the Australian context, OPOL appears

to have been accepted as the most appropriate strategy, as it promotes double monolingualism, and has been widely disseminated as being recommended by language experts. Contributors are therefore doubtful of the effectiveness of alternative approaches. Overall, posters say they are frequently faced with their husbands' inconsistent minority language use. These parents then take responsibility for enriching the language and for reinforcing the bilingual FLP strategy, rather than objectively re-evaluating their approach. Across the data, the bilingual bonus validates the belief that any level of bilingual competency enriches the child, yet native-like proficiency is above all associated with a consistent bilingual child-rearing approach. Parents' persistence with their bilingual FLP strategies, as well as their decisions to not to raise children bilingually both appear to be expressions of the monolingual mindset.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter critically addresses key findings from the analysis in Chapter 4 and relates them to the research questions and existing research as discussed in Chapter 2. This section first provides a brief summary of the study's rationale and key findings followed by a roadmap of the remaining chapter.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the inspiration for this thesis was a thank you note written over two decades ago. Although I am sincerely grateful to my primary school for investing in my English language skills, I am equally grateful to my mother for not taking their advice to only speak English at home. The context in which this note was written indicates a tension between the dominance of English and the valorisation of bilingualism. It further exemplifies a persistence of the monolingual mindset across time. To further explore this tension, this thesis set out to explore how parents talk about bilingualism and bilingual child-rearing in the Australian context.

The present study has focused on publicly available conversations on bilingual child-rearing in one of Australia's largest online parenting websites. My method of data analysis is a combination of thematic and critical discourse analysis. As discussed in Chapter 3, this methodological approach best illuminates underlying language ideologies that inform bottom-up discourses and parental decisions about bilingual child-rearing. The online forum was chosen because, as identified in Chapter 3, an analysis of how individuals, without a specific interest in languages, talk about bilingual parenting is relevant to understanding broader societal attitudes towards bilingualism. This approach provides a broader picture of dominant beliefs and ideologies that reinforce and contest each other in the discursive construction of bilingual child-rearing among parents in the Australian context.

It has been found that due to the prevailing monolingual mindset within languages education, parents adopt bilingual parenting strategies in the home domain. Within this domain, the bilingual bonus underpins the discursive construction of bilingualism as a highly valued skill, and bilingual parenting as an investment in children's futures. However, the monolingual mindset still validates English over other languages, and constrains language-related parental decisions about how to raise children bilingually. Consequently, bilingualism is primarily linked to low-level ambitions among mainstream parents, whereby it is regarded as a generic resource that is first and foremost believed to enrich children's skill set, as opposed to being a language skill in its own right. Overall, due to the dominance of the monolingual mindset in education, 'good' bilingual parents invest in English first, whilst concurrently providing the bilingual bonus by enriching the child's skill set with an additional language. In summary, this study has attempted to illuminate the interrelationship between language ideologies and individual discourses about bilingual child-rearing.

The discussion in Section 5.2 is in response to the first research question on how parents talk about bilingual child-rearing in the Australian context. Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 explore how the monolingual mindset and the bilingual bonus are manifest in contributors' discursive construction of bilingualism. Section 5.3 is in response to the second research question and discusses how bilingual child-rearing is linked to the notion of 'good' bilingual parenting. This chapter concludes with the implications of the key findings and with considerations of possible areas for further research.

5.2. Monolingual discourses shaping bilingual parenting

This section discusses what the analysis of online parental conversations reveals about how prevailing language ideologies underpin the discursive construction of bilingualism and bilingual child-rearing in the Australian context.

5.2.1. The monolingual mindset

An initial key finding is that the monolingual mindset systematically shapes parents' understanding of bilingualism and their choice of bilingual FLP strategy: first, parents have a very narrow definition of bilingualism; secondly, parents believe that bilingual competency can only be achieved by implementing a bilingual FLP strategy that promotes double monolingual language acquisition.

The analysis of conversations on bilingual child-rearing has shown that parents agree on a very narrow definition of *what* bilingualism is. As shown in Section 4.3.1, parents conceive of bilingualism as the simultaneous acquisition of two linguistic varieties from an early age. The expected outcome of simultaneous bilingualism is what Heller (2002, p. 48) terms 'double monolingualism' – the use of each language as if they were learnt as a "homogenous monolingual variety". Heller argues that bilingualism is only valued if it amounts to double monolingualism. This belief is exemplified in Section 4.3 by parents' negative evaluation of consecutive bilingualism.

The monolingual mindset is specifically tied to the valorisation of English over other languages. The analysis has shown that contributors positively evaluate language-related parenting choices where the primary focus is on acquiring English. In my data, the monolingual mindset operates indirectly: it does not render the acquisition of additional languages invisible, but sees bilingualism through a monolingual lens and reinforces the importance of learning English over additional languages. The monolingual mindset therefore paradoxically undergirds contributors' understandings of bilingualism as the simultaneous yet separate acquisition of English and an additional language.

Bilingualism is believed to best be achieved via monolingual language practices. Intertextual references to expert advice reinforce the interpretation of particular beliefs as scientific facts.

Sections 4.3.1 and 4.4.1 have shown that public knowledge on bilingual child-rearing refers to theories and hypotheses such as ‘the earlier, the better’, or ‘consistency is key’ as scientific facts. These supposed facts are used to validate monolingual language practices. Both beliefs are closely associated with the OPOL strategy. HL-vs-CL is the second most frequently mentioned strategy; however, it is mostly evaluated negatively due to parents’ narrow definition of bilingualism as ‘English, plus one’. HL-vs-CL is believed to foster the reverse constellation of ‘minority language, plus English’. Across the data, OPOL is therefore the most widely disseminated and frequently mentioned strategy, as it is believed to neutralise language delay and confusion by ensuring that both languages are learnt autonomously from one another. While contributors are highly familiar with OPOL as an effective bilingual parenting strategy (see Section 2.5), the main criticism towards OPOL seems to have been obscured from public attention. This main criticism of OPOL is its constraints on natural interaction between multilinguals (Döpke, 1998; see Section 2.5). Generally, parents in my data do not consider multilingual interactions as ‘natural’ but as something to be afraid of: the ever-present danger of language mixing is regarded as an impediment to successful bilingual child-rearing.

Another language ideology related to the monolingual mindset that contributors consider as scientific fact is the belief in ‘nativism’. This is expressed in the idea that successful bilingualism should be measured by the absence of an accent that would indicate the presence of another language in the speaker. Additionally, the absence of language mixing in each variety is another indicator that bilinguals are double monolinguals. The principle of fractal recursivity is present by mapping the understanding of monolingual proficiency as ‘pure’ language use onto double monolingual competencies. The main objective of successful bilingualism is therefore to precisely render the presence of two languages invisible.

In summary, the way parents talk about bilingualism is heavily influenced by the monolingual mindset. Parents believe that bilingual native-like proficiency is only reflected in double

monolingualism. Accent and language mixing are deemed indicators of low-level proficiency. As a result of these beliefs, OPOL, as the most widely disseminated bilingual child-rearing strategy, is believed to be the most effective strategy as it circumvents flexible multilingual interactional practices. Instead, OPOL creates an artificial separation that allows for the valorisation of bilingualism in monolingualism.

5.2.2. The bilingual bonus

As identified in Section 5.2.1 and in the introduction to Chapter 5, the monolingual mindset and the bilingual bonus are closely intertwined in the data. The second key finding is that the bilingual bonus is apparent in how parents justify their decisions to raise children as simultaneous bilinguals in the Australian context: first, although bilingualism is highly valued, it is portrayed as a generic skill that is believed to only be accessible to simultaneous bilinguals; second, the realisation of the bilingual bonus is underpinned by monolingual constraints, thus reinforcing the belief that bilingualism is not a linguistic resource in its own right.

Early bilingual child-rearing is, overall, highly valued as a ‘gift’ that parents may impart to their children. This gift is believed to be best passed on in early childhood. During this time, language transmission is perceived as being effortless and worthwhile in terms of mediating the bilingual bonus, and in terms of achieving native-like proficiency. As shown in Section 4.2, most benefits of bilingualism are implicitly stated. Therefore, bilingualism is primarily portrayed as a generic skill, in which competency in a language is associated with cognitive, academic and economic advantages, as opposed to a linguistic resource in its own right. Across the discussion threads, bilingualism is portrayed as a low-level parental ambition that is valued similarly to early Maths, or to learning an instrument. It appears that the gift of bilingualism relates to a parental investment believed to have homogenous outcomes for all children with bilingual competencies. Put differently, the investment is not in a specific minority language.

Primarily, parents invest in bilingualism to provide their children with an academic advantage over their monolingual peers. However, mothers are often confronted with realities that make the implementation of their bilingual FLP strategy difficult. Findings in Section 4.3 and 4.4.2 extend Okita's (2002) observations that mothers feel responsible for the implementation of bilingual parenting strategies by presenting how majority language-speaking mothers aid minority language transmission and maintenance. The data indicates that although these mothers highly value early childhood bilingualism in the home domain, their language-related parenting choices are influenced by two factors: first, a lack of own experiences with bilingual language acquisition; second, a lack of institutional support which, as discussed in Section 2.3, is due to the prevalence of the monolingual mindset in languages education. Despite believing in the bilingual bonus, these parents nevertheless value the acquisition of English over the additional language. This evaluation is based on fears illustrated in Section 4.3 that children will be disadvantaged upon schooling if English has not been acquired beforehand. Therefore, majority language-speaking parents justify their preference for English by explaining that even minimal exposure to the minority language will give children an academic advantage upon schooling. Here, the bilingual bonus indexes 'good' bilingual parenting as imparting 'English, plus one'.

In summary, the key finding is that monolingual constraints underpin the realisation of the bilingual bonus in two ways: first, in the Australian context, bilingualism is valued as a generic skill, thus erasing the value of a language as a linguistic skill in its own right; secondly, parents favour an 'English, plus one' approach for its perceived academic advantages upon schooling and beyond, arguing that even minimal bilingual skills enrich a child's academic skill set.

Overall, Section 5.2 has shown that the discursive construction of bilingualism is characterised by the interrelationship between contested languages ideologies that shape and reinforce each other. The prevailing monolingual mindset reinforces the bilingual bonus as a justification for

bilingual child-rearing in the home domain. In turn, the bilingual bonus, and the way in which parents portray bilingualism, are underpinned by the belief that bilingual competencies are manifest in double monolingualism. As a result, the implementation of OPOL, as the most widely popularised bilingual FLP strategy, is influenced by monolingual practices.

5.3. Bilingual parenting as 'good' parenting

As shown in Section 5.2, key findings suggest that: first, the monolingual mindset systematically shapes parents' understanding of bilingualism and bilingual child-rearing strategies; second, the bilingual bonus is instrumental in how parents justify bilingual child-rearing. In relation to the gap in the research literature outlined in Chapter 2, this study also set out to explore how the notion of 'good' parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy in the Australian context. The final key finding is that bilingual parenting is conceived of as a 'good' parenting strategy as long as it confers a competitive advantage. There are two aspects to this: first, 'good' bilingual parenting is primarily conceived of as imparting the bilingual bonus as an investment that provides a competitive advantage over monolingual peers; second, if the LOTE is not perceived as valuable, then deciding against bilingual parenting is also considered a 'good' parenting strategy. This is believed to ensure the monolingual acquisition of English without the interference of an additional language.

Across my data, parents conceive of 'good' bilingual parenting as imparting the bilingual bonus as a competitive advantage. Alongside the belief that imparting the 'gift' of bilingualism in early childhood is an investment (see Section 5.2.2), it has been shown that parents consider the bilingual bonus as an asset for their children's future academic and economic trajectories. By investing in a skill that enriches their children's development, parents hope they secure them an advantage over their monolingual peers upon schooling and beyond (see Section 4.2). However, as shown in Sections 4.3.3, within this discourse of bilingualism as a competitive advantage, the bilingual bonus renders cultural identity invisible. The perception that

bilingualism, as a generic skill, is unrelated to particular languages appears to render its connotation as an identity marker invisible. Within the research, the prevalence of the monolingual mindset in languages education promotes children's shift towards English upon schooling (Rubino, 2010; see Section 2.3). In my data, it appears that home language maintenance is only perceived viable if the language can be commodified as a competitive advantage within and beyond languages education. Overall, there appears to be a shift from understanding language maintenance in the home as a means of fostering a linguistic and cultural identity, to understanding language for its perceived economic value. Heller's (2003) study of language practices in francophone Canada also identifies a shift from understanding language as an identity marker to "a marketable commodity on its own" (p. 474). As discussed in Section 5.2.2, for the contributors in my data, parents are conceived of as 'good' bilingual parents if the investment is not in a specific language, as any linguistic variety appears to be associated with a competitive advantage resulting from 'good' bilingual child-rearing.

Nevertheless, despite parents' belief in this competitive advantage, bilingual parenting is influenced by various monolingual constraints: first, the fear that children may be disadvantaged if English is not acquired before schooling (see Section 4.3.1 and 4.3.2); second, the belief that bilingualism is only achieved via monolingual practices (see Section 4.4.1); and third, parental hesitation towards using the minority language in public (see Section 4.3.2 and 4.4.2). These constraints exemplify why parents are compelled to evaluate whether their language is worth the hard work and commitment that is associated with achieving the bilingual bonus. Contributors' evaluation of parenting mistakes have been found to be shaped by the dominance of English (see Section 4.3.2). Therefore, not all parents perceive bilingual parenting as a 'good' parenting strategy. The analysis in Sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 has shown that some parents base their language-related parenting choices on whether they perceive their language to be valuable, or 'useful', in the Australian context. The contributors who decide

against bilingual parenting argue that they do not plan to return to their country of origin, nor do they believe that their children will have much opportunity to use the language within Australia (see Section 4.3.3). When the minority language is perceived as not sufficiently valuable to confer a competitive advantage, parents decide to raise their children monolingually (Section 4.3.3), thus conceiving ‘good’ parenting as deciding against bilingual parenting. They believe that due to the perceived value of their language, focussing on English will provide a more competitive advantage than raising their children as ‘insufficient’ bilinguals. Such decisions are the clearest expression of the monolingual mindset.

Across my data, parents who use ‘broken’ English may be indexed as ‘bad’ parents for passing on insufficient English language skills; however, in my data, the parent who uses ‘broken’ Hungarian may be indexed as a ‘good’ bilingual parent for providing additional minority language support. The principle of fractal recursivity is displayed here by portraying the former parents’ low level language skills as insufficient to qualify as language teachers, whereas the latter parent is portrayed as an invested language teacher trying her best to impart the bilingual bonus. The ideological values that underpin these beliefs therefore result in tensions in what is understood as a ‘good’ bilingual parenting strategy. This tension is a further expression of the monolingual mindset. Raising children monolingually due to a lack of perceived competitive value (as shown in Section 4.3.3) is seen as a widely accepted, and non-contested justification, even if the parents in question would be in the position to pass on an additional language in the home domain.

In summary, the key finding is that the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a parenting strategy in which parents make smart language-related choices that will confer a competitive advantage. Across my data, these choices are largely underpinned by the monolingual mindset which not only renders cultural identity invisible, but also indexes ‘good’

language choices as those that provide a competitive advantage without interfering with the successful acquisition of English.

5.4. Implications

This concluding section discusses the implications of this study and possible areas of further research. The implications include: first, in extension to existing language ideology research, the monolingual mindset has been found to operate even in discourses about bilingual parenting where bilingualism is viewed in positive terms; second, contributors are often faced with monolingual constraints that impede bilingual parenting, particularly upon schooling. This study concludes that languages education is a site for potential improvement to provide parents with additional support and resources.

The study contributes to the existing research literature by examining how language ideologies operate for individuals who wish to raise their children bilingually in a context where the ONOL ideology, as the monolingual mindset, renders bi-and plurilingualism largely invisible. As discussed in Section 2.3, existing research has shown that the monolingual mindset is the prevailing language ideology that operates within Australian languages education (Clyne, 2005; Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009; Nicholas, 2015). Concurrently, within language-in-education policies, LOTEs are primarily chosen for their perceived economic advantages for Australia's future generations (Clyne, Fernandez & Grey, 2004); for instance, the increasing prioritisation of Asian languages over the past three decades (Lo Bianco, 2004; Djité, 2011). The belief that additional language competency gives children a competitive advantage over their monolingual peers is not only found on an institutional level; this study has shown that also within the home domain, parents wish to raise their children bilingually for a competitive advantage. Previous studies demonstrated parental desires to communicate in their native language and to pass on their cultural identities (see Okita, 2002; Takeuchi, 2006a; Kirsch, 2012). However, the findings in Section 5.3 show that among the contributors in this online discussion forum, bilingualism

is viewed as a generic skill, and not as a linguistic resource or identity marker in its own right. This finding extends Heller's (2003) observations of a shift from language as an identity marker to language as a commodity. As existing research has shown, bilingualism is often seen through a monolingual lens (Clyne, 2005), and therefore primarily conceived of in terms of double monolingualism (Heller, 2002). Hence, language is only conceived of as a competitive advantage if neither language interferes with the other in the form of accent or language mixing. Consequently, the majority of parents implement the OPOL approach, as it is specifically designed to inhibit language mixing and to limit actual bilingual interactions where language mixing in interaction might occur naturally (Döpke, 1998; see Section 5.2.1). The discussions in my corpus also show that the monolingual mindset prevails not only on a macro-, but also on a micro-level within Australian society. This study extends existing language ideology research that focuses on the family unit by demonstrating that the monolingual mindset is not only evident in language-in-education policies but also operates in the language policies and practices of multilingual and multicultural families.

Because the monolingual mindset works on an individual level in a way that inhibits the effective promotion of languages within the home domain, this research also has implications for languages education. Languages education is currently not sufficiently supporting parents in their bilingual child-rearing efforts. Across my data, parents express a desire to raise their children bilingually and they believe in the value of bilingualism from an early age. However, parents are often unsure how to approach bilingual parenting beyond a consistent OPOL approach. As discussed in Section 4.4.2, when encountering difficulties with their bilingual parenting strategies, parents often blame their situational circumstances, as opposed to reconsidering their bilingual FLP strategy. Previous research has found that parents often reassess their strategies over time (Okita, 2002; see Section 2.4). This study only offers a snapshot of language-related parental decisions discussed at the time of posting. Even so,

findings indicate quite strict and rigid bilingual parenting strategies that are largely influenced by monolingual constraints (see Section 5.2.2). For example, despite the belief in the bilingual bonus, parents largely conceive of bilingualism as competency in ‘English, plus one’. Due to these constraints, the dominance of English is prevalent even within bilingual homes. Furthermore, existing studies on language maintenance suggest that parents need to reassess their bilingual child-rearing approaches upon schooling (see King & Fogle, 2006). Due to the prevalence of the monolingual mindset, and insufficient provision of languages education (Nicholas, 2015; see Section 2.3), school has been identified as a significant site for language shift among young bilinguals (Rubino, 2010; see Section 2.3). Based on these findings, parents’ bilingual efforts may be tested and questioned upon schooling. From this study, it appears that the monolingual mindset may further impede language-related parental decisions, and that parents are not sufficiently prepared for the challenges ahead. Therefore, the findings of this study provide a further impetus to improve the provision of languages in Australian education.

Overall, public conversations offer a site where prevailing language ideologies that operate on an individual level become more accessible, thus revealing beliefs about language and bilingualism among the wider public. This also serves to make the dissemination of academic knowledge more visible, and the discursive construction of bilingualism as a ‘good’ parenting strategy among the broader public more tangible. Although key findings are not generalizable for all parents and carers wishing to raise their children bilingually across the Australian context, they nevertheless provide an insight into the underlying language ideologies that perpetually shape language-related parenting decisions.

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- OP1 [Maylinda]. (2007, March 26). Re: Raising a Bi-Lingual child [online forum thread].
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Thread 1. OP1, March 26 2007, Raising a Bi-Lingual child

OP 1	Maylinda	Marc h 26 2007	<p>I wonder whether there are any mums on EB that speak to their child in a language other than english at home.</p> <p>I speak in another language to my son and DH speaks only English to him (we are a cross cultural couple).We speak english to each other. My son so far responds to both, although my language at the moment seems to be the stronger one as I am at home with him.</p> <p>His vocabulary consists of a mixture of words from both languages. Sometimes I worry that this way of language learning might affect him in the wrong way and delay his language skills. How do you handle another language at home. What about english. How does it work for you.</p>
1	Lime	26 Marc h 2007	<p>Hi Maylinda</p> <p>I speak English to my daughter and my husband only speaks another language to her, however DH and I only speak English together. We're also interested in hearing how this has worked for other families.</p> <p>What we have been told is that children from a bi-lingual home may start to speak (as in put sentences together) slightly later than average but that they soon catch up. Not sure if this is right though.</p>
2	Lacheb	26 Marc h 2007	<p>Hi there,</p> <p>I was raised with 2 languages and apart from mixing the languages a fair bit at a young age there was no delay that I know of (well, thats what my mom says anyway)</p> <p>I have heard that kids that are taught 2 languages are sometimes slower to talk at all but I'm not sure if that's true</p>
3	Jarn77	26 Marc h 2007	<p>As a speech pathologist, I have always advised parents to do exactly what you are already doing - each parent only speak one language to the child, to help the child by providing a clear 'division' between the languages. You may find your child will be at the slower end of the range</p>

			<p>when it comes to putting sentences together - simply because they have so much extra information to organise before they say it -</p> <p>and they will often mix vocab from each language, but children are like sponges and will soak up as much as you can immerse them in! Give them a language-rich environment and you will find a child with far greater ability to express themselves than a child who has been language-deprived (eg not given opportunities for interaction with adults, or had a poor language model)</p> <p>If there is a true 'delay' in their language development you will find it across both languages, not just one.</p> <p>Boys generally are 'slower' than girls when it comes to language development - but this is a broad generalisation and you will find children of either sex at both ends of the scale!</p> <p>e.g. I have two nephews - one speaks in whole sentences at 2 years of age, the other barely put two words together at 2.</p> <p>HTH</p>
4	gipsy	26 Marc h 2007	<p>I want this for DS and was what we had planned before he came along. If only DH would speak his native language to him more. Maybe when his parents visit in a couple of weeks and DS has no idea what they are saying to him, then maybe he'll feel guilty.</p> <p>I think it's a wonderful opportunity you are giving your children and I commend you.</p> <p>Gipsy</p>
5	janineb73	27 Marc h 2007	<p>My Husband is greek and his parents do speak only in greek to the girls when they are visiting. I think it is great that they can speak/understand the 2 very different languages, their Mum certainly can't!</p> <p>DD1 will happily chat away, count to 20 and sing songs in greek and DD2 will join in. DD1 will sometimes drop in and out of greek and may mix up the odd word but I haven't had the preschool teacher or anyone come to me being concerned.</p> <p>DD2 puts together quite long sentences for her age (from my experience with other children of her age) so I don't</p>

			<p>think that it has affected her at all.</p> <p>Janine</p>
6	AnotherFeral	27 March 2007	I think you are giving your son a wonderful gift.
7	Flipflop	27 March 2007	<p>I have an Australian friend married to a Swede. They live in Sweden. They have done the same - she speaks English to her three children and he speaks Swedish. They can now converse in both - great for when they come back to visit. One thing the "aussie" grandmother does is tape playschool and send it over so they are watching shows in English as well. Can you get some shows in your native tongue to let your child watch as they are older?</p>
8	Naomi B	27 March 2007	<p>I speak to my two boys in English and DH only speaks Spanish. DS#1 spoke at a very early age in complete sentences well before he was 2. DS#2 was maybe a few months off being 2, but I have found he was a little harder to understand, he sort of speaks with an accent dont know where that came from as DH doesn't have one. I certainly have not noticed any developmental delays, quite the opposite I think. IMHO it can only be beneficial for them. Good luck with it.</p>
9	InAi	27 March 2007	<p>Both DH and I speak to our girls and with each other in another language.</p> <p>I'm happy to say, they are both bi-lingual now. We have never had any issues or delays with their speech. They are both at school now and are very fluent with English.</p> <p>We hope to do the same with our third!</p>
10	kerstee	28 March 2007	<p>e do the same - my DH and his parents speak to our DS in italian, however not 'full time', they will just intersperse italian words into whatever they are saying in english. Consequently my DS can't speak italian, however he understands single words and can count to 10 so far. Hopefully later on he will be able to speak it fluently when he is older. We haven't noticed that this has had any effect on his speech.</p>

			We also know a little girl the same age as my DS whos mum is italian and dad is german who can understand and speak both those languages as well as english quite well!
11	twinkle_twinkle	28 March 2007	<p>I made the mistake of only teaching my daughter turkish..</p> <p>i kept telling dh to talk in turkish to her while we always speak english to each other</p> <p>recently ive noticed she cant verbally communicate with other kids at parks.</p> <p>so now we are speaking/teaching both to her...and now shes actually asking what they are/the colours etc in english.</p> <p>She knows 8 colours in english, counts to 14 (skips 12) in english and knows a few nursery rhymes in english</p> <p>im not going to make the same mistake with DD #2</p>
12	Trillian*	28 March 2007	I speak Russian to my DD, I also read Russian books to her and will be showing her Russian cartoons when she is older. I think when they grow upmultilingual they dont't realise that it's two (three etc) different languages. To kids it's just one "big" language if you know what I mean.
13	*Dory*	29 March 2007	<p>Hi there</p> <p>My daughter is half Spanish and speaks and reads Spanish quite well and goes to Spanish school once a week. We speak English at home but when she is with her father and his family, it's mainly Spanish. She had absolutely no problems at all with her speech development - she was always advanced with speech and if you heard her now, you'd agree that she is a pretty good talker LOL. I understand some Spanish - at least I know the naughty words so that I'll know if she is swearing at me</p>
14	Angelblue71	01 April 2007	I am pg with number 1 and our plan before reading this post was for my parents to only speak to bub in Spanish and the in-laws to speak to bub in Maltese and DH and I will speak to bub in English.

			<p>But now I am going to do some more research as maybe we should wait until bub is speaking in English and then introduce the other languages.</p> <p>Personally, I found being bi-lingual always gave me an advantage over the other kids when it came to subjects like English as well as any languages that we were taught at school however my first language was Spanish and I didn't learn English until I was 4.</p>
15	hallon	03 April 2007	<p>It really is amazing how kids learn languages. They are little sponges.</p> <p>My daughter speaks Swedish at daycare and English at home. Her father and I are native English speakers, so only speak to her in English. We ask all of our friends to speak their native language (Swedish or English) with her.</p> <p>Her Swedish was slower to develop than her English, but she is doing brilliantly.</p> <p>She is 2.5 years old and in English is very well-spoken with a large vocabulary. We have been told that her Swedish is on a par with other children her age.</p> <p>We have many friends with bilingual kids - most speak only their native language with their children.</p> <p>Here are some links to sites about raising bilingual kids: http://www.bilingualbabies.org/modules/new...e.php?storyid=1 http://www.angelfire.com/ut/henrikholm/bil...ilingual01.html http://www.multilingualchildren.org/</p>

Thread 2. OP2, 16 June 2007, ...is the best way to raise your child bilingually?

OP2	JustSmileAndNod	16 June 2007	<p>I am hoping parents who use two languages at home can help me out...</p> <p>My Husband is Hungarian and I am Australian, we want our daughter to speak Hungarian in addition to regular English.</p>
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			<p>My Husband only speaks Hungarian to our daughter, I speak English and some BASIC Hungarian. We speak English to each other.</p> <p>I am keen to know how your family goes about speaking another language and what is recommended by the experts! IE Do you mix English and the other language or is this bad? Should I just stick to English only as it is not my native language?</p> <p>We have already got some Hungarian books and videos for her, and IL's only speak Hungarian to us as well.</p>
1	papilio	16 June 2007	<p>Not that I'm an expert, but I think what you are doing is great. I have heard that children raised in this environment take a little bit longer to pick up language, but when they do, they have two languages.</p>
2	bartsimpson	16 June 2007	<p>My neighbour used to speak Hungarian to their daughter at home. The only time they spoke English at home was if they had guests over who couldn't speak Hungarian. They would speak only English outside the house.</p> <p>This in result sparked her interest off that she then went and learnt another 2 languages. She now works at the air port and makes good money. (as she speaks four languages)</p> <p>One of my mums girlfriends did similar with Italian but somewhere along the way after the 2nd child started school they dropped Italian speaking at home as children would want to keep talking in English. Now all these years later the first 2 children can speak it where as the next 3 children she had only know basic words in Italian.</p> <p>I learnt a second language in high school and can remember most of it these days. I think if you use it your more likely to remember it.</p>

			I guess it depends on your family but if its working now then I would leave it as it is.
3	Guest_Libra76_*	16 June 2007	<p>I'm Dutch speaking and DH is Australian. While he lived in Belgium with me and our DS was born, DS was surrounded by 90% Dutch and only a small part English (DH). DH and I always speak English to eachother.</p> <p>We moved to Australia when DS was 2.5 years old. I have always tried my very best to only speak Dutch to DS but believe me, it is very hard to keep it up sometimes. Or maybe I just failed LOL. It is hard because over here I speak English to everyone (naturally) and DS knows that. So he knows I fully understand him when he asks me something in English. This has led to a stage where he refused to speak Dutch when addressing me. It is hard for me to keep it up all the time, eg. when DS is being naughty in the shops and I reprimand him in Dutch, then people around me look at me as if I'm an alien and as if I let him get away with it?? Whereas if I reprimand him in English, at least they know what I'm doing. IYKWIM ...it's difficult to explain.</p> <p>So, DS understands 100% of what I say in Dutch, but can only speak 30% in Dutch of what he can say in English. He is now 4.5 and I have noticed ups and downs. Months on end where he refuses to respond to me in Dutch, or ask questions in Dutch, and then he changes and is very willing to learn new words. So I think all is not lost, and if I keep my efforts up, he will speak it fluently.</p> <p>Then there's reading and writing. He can spell the alphabet in Dutch, spell words, write words in Dutch because I only teach him in Dutch when it comes to reading and writing. So I will only read Dutch books to him too.</p> <p>Sorry if the post is messy, I rambled on a bit. I'm pregnant now, and with the next child I will try my very best again, and in the end that's all you can do.</p>

			<p>Good luck!</p> <p>Els</p>
4	~*~Kate~*~	16 June 2007	<p>DD has a friend who's mother is Chinese and father Australian.</p> <p>They are separated now.</p> <p>nThe mother has her daughter all through the week and they only speak Chinese and the father every weekend and they only speak English.</p> <p>The little girl(aged 7)is fluent in both.</p> <p>I find it amazing that people can speak fluently in two or more languages.</p>
5	Munchkin's Mum	16 June 2007	<p>I have extra assistance, I have Dora!</p> <p>DH and I speak spanish and english, her grandparents only speak spanish to her and expect a spanish answer.</p> <p>We speak English to her and she respond in english but when we speak spanish we expect a spanish answer also. It's hard with daycare but as soon as she picks up a new english word and uses it we give her the Spanish equivelant and teach her how to use it.</p> <p>Other than that, the Dora DVD's are pretty good. Very handy!</p>
6	And-baby-makes-four	16 June 2007	<p>I only speak English, but my best friend is married to a Swede, and we have spoken at length about speaking both languages to their DS (2y.o). The only down side is that they may take a little longer to speak, but once they do they will have the benefit of being bilingual.</p> <p>I'd say go for it -the long term gains are worth the minor speech delay. My friends little one has lots of Swedish toys and videos which also teaches my friend basic Swedish too!</p> <p>Apparently children are much better at learning new languages than adults, and once you have learnt one extra language, it is much easier to pick up others.</p>

			<p>Good luck!</p> <p>Dee</p>
7	virtuallotus	16 June 2007	<p>Both of my parents were Hungarian, as was my sister. As for myself, I was born in Australia.</p> <p>As a family, we learnt English watching Sesame Street. And of course lots of practice!</p> <p>Although I guess that's beside the point...in general, we talked a mixture of English and Hungarian at home. Sometimes things were easier to say in English, and at other times in Hungarian. I can't remember having any difficulties in learning to speak either language, or when the appropriate time was to use them.</p> <p>Currently, I speak only English really as my partner is English and have no family nearby. When I do hear Hungarian, I can pick up bits and pieces and it takes a while to become accustomed to it.</p> <p>Sorry, not much helpful advice there but congrats in teaching your kids another language. They'll definitely benefit from it!</p>
8	Bloomer	16 June 2007 -	<p>I had a friend who spoke French to her DD and her partner spoke English. Took her DD a while longer to speak but eventually understood the difference between the two.. Apparently she is now 4 and refuses to speak French.</p> <p>Other friends went to Germany to live when DD was 2 when they returned she was 5 and spoke perfect German and English. The parents did not speak good German but luckily had a German speaking neighbour. Their DD decided she did not want to speak German again. My DH has tried to talk to her a while later and she understands but refuses to speak it.</p> <p>My DH is Dutch while he speaks to them in Dutch and English to them. DD wants to watch movies in Dutch and Spanish.. she loves Dora and says in Spanish we say XX and in English..XX.. I want her to learn a language.. DH speaks Dutch, German and English</p>

9	sotetno	16 June 2007	<p>**Puss*in*Boots** your story is exactly mine - Hungarian husband, me English speaker and I have some basic Hungarian.</p> <p>DH is supposed to speak always in Hungarian to our sons but sometimes doesn't remember. I'd say 70% of what comes out of his mouth around the kids is Hungarian. 10% of the time he forgets and the other 20% I need to be included in a more complex conversation.</p> <p>At a young age I try to do all the "teaching" of language in Hungarian (like when you are singing songs, or saying "this toy is red, this one is blue" to the actual child) as that is my level of Hungarian. I've also got the "motherly" type commands down pat in Hungarian like "come here" and "don't touch that" or "lunch is ready" etc that I repeat multiple times a day.</p> <p>Other than that I speak 90% of the time to them in English.</p> <p>My (almost) 4 year old understands everything his Dad says to him but would only reply in Hungarian rarely.</p> <p>Both my boys are slower at starting to speak. Nick started saying lots of words and putting two words together about 23 months. This is in no way really delayed just a little behind. I'd put him about two months behind "average". Ernie is currently 20 months and only has 6 words. Again I'd put him about 2 months behind "average". I'm in no way concerned about these "delays" as I think they are normal both because my boys are "boys" and because they are learning two languages and there is lots to think about. My 4 year old is a on-stop talker now in English and the Hungarian is there but less used.</p> <p>Both boys will go to Hungarian Saturday school once they are 5. I think this is a wonderful way to help out with the extra ommph needed with an English speaker being the main carer. My DHs teenage nieces are in</p>
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			<p>the same boat with one Hungarian one English parent and Hungarian school has really helped them to get regular practice at the language. As has attending Hungarian Scouts where they are supposed to only speak Hungarian.</p> <p>DVDs and books are also great. We collect as many as we can.</p> <p>And if you're in Sydney you can come to adult Hungarian school with me to learn more. PM me if you want more info.</p> <p>I've read the opinions that say if you are not a fluent speaker then don't try to speak the other language. But I don't try to say more than I am comfortable with and I think every little bit counts.</p>
10	Maylinda	16 June 2007	<p>I speak to DS in Albanian and DH speak to him in English (being Australian). We speak English at home but if I am speaking to my son and asking him to do something, I speak in my language. He is 18 months and understands instructions in both languages(i.e brings our shoes, takes the nappy to the rubbish bin, takes bread from the fridge, takes off his shoes). His vocabulary consists of ten words, all in Albanian at this stage. as long as he understands both of us and has already started speaking in the stronger language, I believe there has been no delay with his language skills. you can only keep trying.</p> <p>as far as the non-responsiveness in the LOTE is concerned, I would persist. I teach LOTE and my students tend to speak in English to me sometimes. I do not respond at all and wait for them to switch back to LOTE. It is very hard but also very possible.</p>
11	BlancheNeige	16 June 2007 -	<p>Our children are trilingual - they speak English with me (I'm Australian), Italian with DH and they go to a French-speaking crèche as we live in an area of Switzerland where French is spoken.</p> <p>We've done a huge amount of reading on bringing up multilingual children and you'd be amazed at the number of different ways you can use to do it</p>

			<p>successfully. All of the authors agree though that the first five years are crucial if you want your child to be truly fluent in both languages.</p> <p>Some families choose to adopt a language that they speak at home (often works best if you live in a country where the child will be going to school in the dominant language i.e. if you speak Hungarian at home but live in Australia then it may make sense to adopt Hungarian as your family language). Given that we don't live somewhere where either of our languages is spoken as the dominant language, what's worked for us is going with what comes naturally i.e. I always speak English with the boys, DH always speaks to them in Italian and we speak a mixture of English and Italian between ourselves.</p> <p>Interestingly (and I'm sure that this is going to happen more and more once they start school), when our boys are playing together they prefer to speak in French.</p> <p>What is important is to promote the idea of bilingualism as something that is special and has value. Show your child that you can understand both languages and expose them to as many books and as much music etc. that you can in each language.</p> <p>Try not to buy into some of the myths that are out there about multilingual children - there's actually no research to show that children who speak more than one language begin talking later than other children (Matteo began speaking in sentences in all three languages at around 20 months and Ruben started at about 18 months). It's also not been shown that bilingual children have a less rich vocabulary in each language - it all depends on the input they're given.</p> <p>Clearly, children will go through stages growing up and they may reject one language temporarily but I think that it's important to persist because later on they'll realise that being bilingual is part of their identity.</p> <p>Good luck with everything, it is challenging figuring</p>
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			out the whole dynamic of bilingualism but in the end I think that fluency in a second language is a real gift for life (and certainly one that I would've loved to have had growing up !).
12	**Kaz**	16 June 2007	My Aunty who is married to a French Canadian speaks both english and french in their home and the children do the same it sounds great mixed as we get to learn a bit of french ourselves.
13	FunkyB	6 June 2007	<p>My DH and I are raising Reuben within an extended family environment as bot my FIL and MIL live with us. They are Macedonian. Although I speak minimal Macedonian, I encourage the rest of the family to speak Macedonian to Reuben, as I read up on langauage acquisition prior to having DS.</p> <p>Unfourtantly, the rest of the family has found it difficult to exclusively speak Maco to Reuben when Im around as I dont understand and it becomes confusing. However, MIL looks after Reuben while Im at work each day, and so when Im absent they speak only Macedonian, watch Macedonian Kids shows, sing in Maco etc. (Hes only 10 months ATM). I will also push for Maco Saturday school when he is old enough.</p> <p>My fear is that he will be similar to my nephew who stayed with us 3 nights a week until he was about 7. He understands Macedonian perfectly, but is unable to speak it at all. I suspect this was because he went home to an english speaking household and was never called on to provide answers in Macedonian. So, I will encourage everyone to draw out replies in macedonian from Reuben as he gets older. Hopefully this will assist.</p> <p>Now if only they had Dora in Macedonian too!!</p>
14	JustSmileAndNod	17 June 2007	<p>Wow all excellent replies there!! Thanks everyone for taking the time to reply so thoroughly!</p> <p>Sotetno - yes our families sound very similar! I am very interested in Hungarian school however there is none in Canberra unfortunately, the Hungarian scouts sound great as well! We are not really involved in the</p>

			<p>Hungarian community here but are planning on getting more involved. We do have a Hungarian Dance Group. I also have the "Mum type" language for a baby such as "Let's change your nappy", "would you like a drink" etc. so will continue to expand on these.</p> <p>You have given me hope, as I was worried I didn't know enough! My husband's parents only speak Hungarian to her as well so will continue with this.</p> <p>My Hungarian has improved recently as we went to Hungary a month ago for 3.5 weeks, it was easier to learn being immersed in the language and we plan on going back every two years.</p> <p>FunkyB - That is great that your MIL looks after Rueben, that would be an excellent way to get language across! When Natalia gets older I will be encouraging the IL's to look after her as much as possible LOL! At the moment we see the IL's only once a week, and can't have her babysat for too long as she is still fully breastfed (refuses bottles).</p> <p>Maylinda - Will definitely keep that in mind as other PP's suggested, encourage her to speak Hungarian back to us. And (gently!) persevere even when she only wants to speak English</p> <p>Blanchneige - Thanks so much for the encouragement, I was worried about speech delay etc. but I suppose every child is different anyway, so it is hard to predict if they would have spoken only one language earlier. What a wonderful gift for your children to know three languages!! Especially living in Europe they will be able to travel practically anywhere without language barriers.</p> <p>Thanks to everyone else, I will keep on going with my Hungarian and basic phrases, and Hubby will keep on speaking only Hungarian.</p> <p>We were lucky enough to buy lots of DVD's and Books overseas, as Hungarian seems to be a little</p>
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			<p>tricky to source in Canberra and even online in Australia.</p> <p>Thanks!</p> <p>Mel</p>
15	sotetno	19 June 2007	<p>**Puss*in*Boots** - can't believe you are a Mel too. Now you just have to tell me that your husband is an Attila and I'll fall off my chair. Not that that's unlikely in the Hungarian community</p> <p>As soon as I heard you were in Canberra I was going to say you have an excellent dance group there</p> <p>And yeah I'm still waiting for the Hungarian's to get themselves more online so I can order more books and DVDs easily (rather than asking family and friends or friends of friends to pick stuff up while they are there). It's a little better than a few years ago, as there are two places (I think) that will now post to Australia (for astronomical postage!!) so I reckon in another few years time it'll be much easier to source all that wonderful stuff.</p> <p>We haven't been to Hungary in 7 years (pre kids) so really looking forward to getting back there again. I can only see my Hungarian rapidly improving if I go there and HAVE to use it. Your recent trip sounds fantastic for that.</p>
16	IsolaBella	19 June 2007	<p>My SIL is German and by Brother is Aussie. In the 2.5yrs since my nephew was born they have lived in Berlin, London and now Switzerland (German speaking part).</p> <p>My SIL speaks German exclusively to the kids, my brother English. My SIL didn't want my brother teaching the kids German as although his german is VERY GOOD, it is not that of a native.</p> <p>I saw my nephew just as he turned 2 (for the first time since he was 4m) and OMG his vocabulary and sentence structure was amazing (my DS will be</p>

			<p>nothing like that in one language by 2). So as PP have said, late/early talking with 2 languages will depend on the child.</p> <p>My nephew knows who to speak German & who to speak English to.</p> <p>The funny thing is his cousins were born in Japan and have moved back to Germany in the past year and my nephew is correcting the German pronunciation of his cousins who are older than him. His cousins speak German & Japanese (German parents and went to a Japanese creche).</p>
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Thread 3. OP3, 14 October 2007, Bilingual families – can you tell me about your bilingual baby?

OP3	Lime	14 Oct 2007	<p>Our daughter has just turned one and we use two languages with her.</p> <p>I am a stay at home mum and I use English with her. My DH only speaks Hebrew with her with the odd English words and phrases thrown in, but he always uses English with me. I also use just a few Hebrew words and sing some songs in Hebrew with her.</p> <p>We live here in Australia so socially she almost always hears English. She watches some DVDs in Hebrew.</p> <p>So... I'm interested in hearing about how it works for other bilingual families. How did your child grasp the two languages? When did they first start to use words, and which language came first?</p> <p>It's quite a fascinating process and I really am wondering how she'll go. For instance, she points to the light, and I say "yes, light!" and my husband says the same thing in Hebrew. She understands "where is your tongue/nose?" in both Hebrew and English.</p> <p>So just hoping to hear from others who are in or have been in similar situations.</p>
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			Cheers!
1	IVE*GONE*MAD	14 Oct 2007	i have a friend whos x,dp is croatian(sp) & their ds now 6 has spoken both since learning to talk, he speaks croat with his dads family & english with everyone else tho he has bean known to swear at school in croatian naughty lil terror
2	Snagglepussed	14 Oct 2007	<p>I am Australian Hubby is Italian</p> <p>DD1 was born in Italy and was looked after primarily by MIL from 8 mths! From the outset I only spoke Enlgish and Hubby only spoke Itailan! We spoke Italian to one another! I was convinced she would never speak English! We are now living in Australia - came when DD1 was 4 years and 4 mths and the first phrase in English she uttered to me was at the airport in Milan as they calle dour flight "Mummy can we go now!" I nearly fell of my bar stool!</p> <p>DD2 was born in Italy but spent most of her first year with me as I was working from home! Again I spoke only English to her, DD1 and DH spoke Italian to her, DH and I spoke Italian to one another! At one year of age exactly we moved here to Oz..... now we speak ONLY Italian at home and we both try to speak only Italian to her! very confusing for the poor mite! But her first lingo is definitely English but she understands everything in Italian and is now asking for all videos, songs etc in Italian!</p> <p>I try to only play movies in Italian where I can but her main focus is English!</p> <p>I jsut know when we go back she will slip into Italian no problem, as will DD1 who now is a little faltering on the I-tie front!</p> <p>Persevere and you will come through! It's a great thing to have!</p> <p>Both my daughters were late talkers! DD2 at 3 (in Nov) is still not speaking full on conherent sentences</p>

			<p>but I really don't sweat that as she makes herself understood and it's coming along in leaps and bounds!</p> <p>Kim</p>
3	Jane01	14 Oct 2007	<p>I hope you don't mind me answering, because I have no actual personal knowledge, but about 70% of DD#2's babygroup is bilingual, so I have had some exposure.</p> <p>In our babygroup, mum (well, the primary care giver who in our babygroup is the mum) speaks to the child in her native language. In the group we have a Danish speaker, Cantonese Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese and French. We are expats in Hong Kong if you were wondering about the large number of languages.</p> <p>The Danish and French babies have mum and dad speaking Danish and French. So, at the moment they only speak Danish and French. They also speak a little English to their helpers (nannies). They will learn English when they start going to playgroups and school. Their parents plan to send them to English schools if they are still in Hong Kong.</p> <p>The Chinese and Japanese babies have a Chinese/Japanese mum and English speaking dad. Actually one baby has a French speaking dad, but they only speak English at home as mum doesn't speak much French. These babies generally just speak Chinese/Japanese at the moment. A few words in English from their dad/helpers. Again, they will learn more English when they go to school/playgroup. Their English is generally a little better than the almost mono-lingual babies, but we are talking about 1.5 year olds here so no language is great.</p> <p>I have read that bilingual babies take longer to talk than others, perhaps because they are learning 2 words for everything. That hasn't been my experience in babygroup. They all seem to be speaking about the same amount. The babies that know a few words of</p>

			<p>English seem to switch effortlessly between the languages and seem know who to speak English to and who to speak, say, Chinese to. It is very interesting !</p> <p>I would imagine that your DH will have to spend a lot of time speaking to your child, as well as reading Hebrew books, etc., if he is not the primary care giver and your child is going to go to an English speaking school. Exposure to family/cousins/friends, etc can also help.</p> <p>Goodluck !</p>
4	Lime	15 Oct 2007	<p>Thanks everyone, very interesting replies. I have copied this for DH to read too.</p> <p>Thanks!</p>
5	twoangelboys	15 Oct 2007	<p>I would like my ds to learn fathers language but father says there is little chance of that happening when i dont speak that language</p>
6	Snagglepussed	15 Oct 2007	<p>Yes the primary carer thing can be quite important.</p> <p>They don't call it Mother Tongue for nothing you know!</p> <p>I have an English friend in Italy. He is married to an Italian and their daughter does not speak English fluently which is a real shame!</p> <p>Tell him to be very consistent.</p> <p>Kim</p>
7	manhattan	15 Oct 2007	<p>My Mom's had heaps of bilingual kids in her FDC, and several that were trilingual. All of them spoke about a year later than their peers but were pretty much fluent in both (or all 3) languages the second they started talking. It seems the key is to be consistent and not panic if it looks like it's taking a while!</p>

8	BlancheNeige	17 Oct 2007	<p>Our boys are trilingual - they speak English with me (I'm Australian), Italian with my DH (he's Swiss-Italian) and French at crèche/pre-school (we live in the French-speaking region of Switzerland).</p> <p>So far we've had absolutely no problem with the boys' language and I'm often amazed by their ability to do simultaneous translation. They were both reasonably early talkers (each of them started speaking words and then phrases in each language at around 15-16 months) and learned all of the languages pretty much simultaneously. I would say that they now (at ages 4.75 and 2.75) have an equal level of fluency in each language but I can see that French will probably become their 'mother tongue' as it's the language that they speak with each other and the language they'll use at school.</p> <p>We know a lot of multilingual families here and have heard very few stories of it *not* working out. There are a number of different ways to go about encouraging and supporting bilingualism and even though it was once thought that you had to be very strict about the "one parent one language" rule, apparently there's new research that shows that children also need to know that you can understand and speak the "other" language (so it's good that you're using a bit of Hebrew with your daughter as she knows that if she gets 'stuck' and needs you to give her a word in English or in Hebrew then you'll be able to translate).</p> <p>Good luck with everything, I'm soooooo envious of children who grow up being bilingual (sure beats struggling to learn a foreign language later on).</p>
9	JackiOT	17 Oct 2007	<p>My boy is bilingual. He speaks English at home with us and Cantonese with his grandparents (where he goes two days a week).</p> <p>He has been a little slower coming out with words but definitely understands both and uses words and phrases in both now. Sometimes I have to ring up and check what a new word might mean! (Though he</p>

			<p>generally now knows to use English at home)</p> <p>I was talking to a Speech Path about it and they said above all it is important to have a consistent approach to how each language is used (ie specific person, at home vs out, upstairs vs downstairs) otherwise the languages can meld and children can feel quite unsure about how to express their needs.</p> <p>There is research suggesting that children speaking more than one language have better development in some areas of the brain. So it is all very exciting!</p>
10	Guest_Cali27_*	17 Oct 2007	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>There is research suggesting that children speaking more than one language have better development in some areas of the brain. So it is all very exciting!</p> <p>Yes and this is why full immersion language programmes in highschools are called 'extension' rather than 'language'.</p> <p>My son starts full immersion in French next year when he goes to Benowa high School.</p> <p>Until year 10, every subject will be taught in French.</p> <p>Their results in years 11 and 12 consistently show the French immersion students are way ahead in ALL subjects.</p> <p>He doesn't speak a word of yet either. So bilingualism needn't start in infancy to be effective (although it's better if it does, i believe).</p>
11	BlancheNeige	17 Oct 2007	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>There is research suggesting that children speaking more than one language have better development in some areas of the brain</p> <p>Apparently it's also been shown that bilingual people are less likely to suffer from dementia or other</p>

			<p>degenerative brain conditions in old age. The way in which 'thinking' happens is supposed to be very different when there's more than one language being used.</p> <p>Cali, that's really interesting about your son's school. I have certainly heard that learning a foreign language is more effective when it happens across every subject area but didn't realise that it was also linked with better learning overall. We're looking at the French-Australian school in Canberra for our boys and in the French primary stream they do 4 days in French and 1 in English but they still call it a bilingual education.</p>
12	Mispella	17 Oct 2007	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>Apparently it's also been shown that bilingual people are less likely to suffer from dementia or other degenerative brain conditions in old age</p> <p>This is very reassuring as a bilingual speaker!</p> <p>We speak two languages with DD and she seems to recognise words for the same thing in both languages. She's under a year old though, so we'll see how it goes.</p> <p>My DB & SIL made a decision to only speak Greek to my nephew. He did take a long time to start talking, however once he started pre-school (aged 3.5) he immediately began speaking perfect English - literally overnight, as well as a sophisticated level of Greek!</p> <p>He now translates ridiculously accurately and can switch between the two languages depending on who he is talking to. I find this very impressive at age 4.</p> <p>I have friends from France and Italy who were completely shocked that most Australians don't speak at least another language. I think it's the norm to be at least bilingual in Europe.</p> <p>I've been trying to learn French on and off for years</p>

			and have found it tres difficile , so I definitely think the earlier you begin learning the better.
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Thread 4. OP4, 24 January 2008, Bi Lingual kids and speech development

OP4	hamiriver	24 Jan 2008	<p>NOt sure if there is somewhere more appropriate to post this, however..</p> <p>My son has just turned 2 and my husband speaks his native language at home and to my son exclusively . Luckily I can understand say about 75% of what he says to him. So basically he hears English all day and from everyone except his Dad.</p> <p>I am just wondering about his speech development at his age. I think it is reasonable to expect as he is exposed to a 2nd language that his first language skills may not be the same as a 2yo with only 1 language.</p> <p>I would say in English he probably has over 100 words, can point to things and say what it is, can understand what I am saying and occassinally will put a couple of words together like" where is he" . He sometimes throws in a foreign word.</p> <p>Does anyone have any experience in this? Thanks</p>
1	kittennic	24 Jan 2008	<p>1. What a fantastic asset for your son 2. DS1 had <20 words at age 2, and no 2+ word combinations, but he was a bit behind (he'd caught up by 2 1/2).</p> <p>So yes I'd probably expect some delays/confusion at some point. Possibly some language mixing/switching (using a different language than the main one he's using at that point in time for words or phrases) at times too. He'll work it all out, as long as you're consistent. And having his dad speak only in the foreign language to him is perfect.</p> <p>But he's doing very well at the moment anyway, as far as I'm concerned</p>

2	squishysmum	24 Jan 2008	I have heard that bilingual children take longer to talk, as with everything having two names, it takes them a little longer to work out what is what. Great asset though. I should have done the same with DS but haven't...
3	BigMumaBear	24 Jan 2008	<p>Hi there.</p> <p>Both DD's speak 2 languages. English from my side & Viet from DP's side. DP didn't speak as much of his language to my eldest DD, who is 5, and now she can understand bits but not as much as her 2yo sister who was spoken to frequently from birth.</p> <p>When DD2 started speaking more clearer it came across that she spoke & understood viet more than she did english, even though I was the one around her for most of the day & she was constantly speaking English more, but as she got just that bit older (now at 2.5) she speaks English soooooooo much clearer & uses it more than Viet. She knows numbers, colours, body parts etc in both Languages, where as DD5 knows all of the above also, but she is much MUCH better in English.</p> <p>I found with DD2 that her speech was more delayed than DD5 at the same age & I was a little concerned at the time. BUT that being said, given 1 month or so after I raised this concern, she was talking the brass ears off a monkey.</p> <p>I'm sure ur son will branch out with his speech a little more as time goes on & u will probably find that he will be able to speak both languages more than u thought, once u can understand better.</p> <p>Also, DD2 done would do the same thing as ur son, she would point to say my nose, mouth eyes etc, go thru the whole list but then name my head in Viet, or my mouth. lol It's cute.</p>
4	Amber7	24 Jan 2008	When i studied Childrens Services, they said that children under 8 are the most receptive to learning multiple languages and will pick up alot when exposed to it. Im sure he has already picked up that its a language that only his dad is speaking to him and with time will learn to

			<p>seperate the 2 languages and speak them appropriately.</p> <p>Its truely a great assest and something him and his dad can share together!</p> <p>I think you would be suprisd by the amount of things children pick up on and sounds like he is doing great already with his vocabulary and developing at his own rate.</p>
5	BlancheNeige	24 Jan 2008	<p>Our children are trilingual - English, Italian and French. DH and I have done a lot of research on raising multilingual children and based on that (as well as our own experience and those of friends with multilingual children), I really don't subscribe to the widely-voiced view that children with more than one language routinely experience delays in speech. Both of our boys began talking in each language at around 18-21 months and they have always been quite advanced with their language skills.</p> <p>It's normal for monolingual children to 'experiment' with words sounds and with grammar. multilingual children tend to be very good at picking up patterns and making logical guesses about words and grammatical constructions - sometimes they get things right and other times not but I don't think that that's necessarily a problem, they soon figure out the appropriate word.</p> <p>My one major piece of advice would be to relax and go with the flow. Children are amazing in their ability to soak up language like sponges and having another language is a gift that your DS will have for life.</p>
6	GeraniumQueen	25 Jan 2008	<p>Both our kids are bilingual, my daughter was talking very clearly in 4-5 word sentences at 18 months, my son did not start talking properly until he was 3...so in my opinion it depends on the child and has nothing little to do with learning 2 languages.</p> <p>Now they are 6 and 7 and both fluent in both languages and can distinguish between the two, still they throw in a "foreign" word sometimes, mainly for convenience if the word or expression is easier in one language than the other, but generally they are very good at staying in one</p>

			<p>language and know exactly who to talk in what language to.</p> <p>It took a lot of time and effort for the non-english language from our side, but it is sooo worth it in the long run, such an advantage for them in life, definately worth persevering.</p> <p>I would just go with the flow, if you are worried about his speech development see the Child Health Nurse or a Speech therapist, but at this stage I would not be worried yet, sounds like he is doing really well.</p> <p>HTH</p> <p>Edited as I can't let Girolama beg and not be heard</p>
7	hamiriver	25 Jan 2008	<p>thanks for all the replies.</p> <p>I am starting to do some readng about this subject, to undertsand how they learn- its looks interesting.</p> <p>My frist son understands everything his dad says but also only used the occassional foreign language word . After holidays we find that he will use more foreign language words as well. The kids will speak English and get the foriegn language back from their Dad.</p> <p>I am so glad we are persisting with the other language as the kids can understand their cousins and grandpa which is lovely.</p>
8	credence	25 Jan 2008	<p>I disagree that teaching a child two languages simultaneously slows their speech development. Like some others have suggested, I believe that it's the individual child and has nothing to do with being bilingual. My son has been spoken to in two languages and he's had very good speech from an early age. He's now 20 months and speaks in 5-6 word sentences in either language and can use both interchangeably. He knows how to say the same thing in both languages for most things and constantly surprises us. I think the key is consistency. You can't mix in english with the other language or vice-versa. You speak to your child in one language at a time and you can't go wrong.</p>

9	Snagglepussed	25 Jan 2008	<p>Both my DD are bilingual and although DD1 did speak later than normal, DD2 only spoke in comprehensive sentences at almost 3 so I tend to agree with</p> <p>QUOTE</p> <p>so in my opinion it depends on the child and has nothing to do with learning 2 languages.</p> <p>Although I would beg to change one word</p> <p>QUOTE</p> <p>so in my opinion it depends on the child and has nothing little to do with learning 2 languages.</p> <p>I think there is some bearing on the 2 lingo thing but we'll never know as to get the right testing you would have to use the same child which is impossible!!!!</p> <p>Don't worry about it and as Jo said, just go with the flow! It's a fantastic asset!</p> <p>Kim</p>
10	Snorlax	25 Jan 2008	<p>Well we're another bi-lingual family, French and English here. I was concerned that my kids may find it hard and the two may confuse or delay them..(no evidence of this thus far), however I really think the pros of having two languages (or more!) far outweigh any cons in the long run.</p>
11	Ashanti	25 Jan 2008	<p>Hi there</p> <p>DS is bilingual. We spoke to him from birth in Croatian and he picked up English along the way. Until about 2.5 years old DS knew only Croatian but now at nearly 4 he is more fluent in English. I think this is from television, kindy, friends etc. DS is going through a stage at the moment where he doesn't want to speak Croatian because none of his friends do though.</p> <p>DS was a pretty late talker in English but was speaking a lot of Croatian by 2.5 years old. By about 3 he had completely caught up with his English compared to children who only speak one language.</p> <p>The beauty of introducing languages so early on in children is that they pick them up so easily.</p>

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Thread 5. OP5, 16 May 2008, Bi-lingual

OP5	babybrain	16 May 2008	<p>Hi All,</p> <p>Just seeing if there are any people here who bring up their child bi- or multi-lingual and what the best approach would be.</p> <p>On one side I want my DS to learn my mother tongue, but I don't want him not being able to speak english because then he might have problems socialising.</p>
1	75sx	16 May 2008	<p>Dont worry about them not learning English as they will pick it up via TV, interacting with others and at school.</p> <p>I would've loved my kids to learn to speak my mother language but I am hopeless at it myself and English is much easier for me.</p> <p>Apparently kids pick up different languages easily and the younger you start, the easier it is for them.</p>
2	CurlyTops	16 May 2008	<p>Hi, sorry for the long post, this is a favourite topic of mine because children are such a sponge for languages at an early age.</p> <p>A friend of mine said her paed told her that if she wants her daughter to learn her language, she must speak to her in it all the time, rather than some words here and there and the rest in english. So now she speaks to her DD in her language, and her DH speaks in english.</p> <p>But if you and your DH speak in a language other than english at home all the time, then english will be your child's second language. I grew up in a high ethnic neighbourhood and saw all too many kids attending special ESL (english as a second language) classes at school and suffering setbacks due to their parents not speaking any English at home. My own parents used to speak our mother tongue at home all the time until we</p>

			<p>were at school when they decided that they were in Australia now and spoke to the children in English and each other in native tongue. But I am sad now because this meant that I cant speak their language more than a few words. (And I can't teach my own DS!)</p> <p>I have a relative who is now 16 and speaks both French and English because her father spoke to her in french only and her mother in english. She used to reply to her father in french and to her mother in english.</p>
3	IsolaBella	16 May 2008	<p>My Niece and Nephew are bi-lingual.</p> <p>My SIL speaks German to them at home and my brother speaks English.</p> <p>At 3yrs my nephew knows who to speak English to and who to speak German to (ie. my family doesn't speak German and SILs family speaks both German and English).</p>
4	taki	16 May 2008	<p>Hi,</p> <p>my family is bilingual and my DH and I speak to children in our mother language. We did not speak to them in English from the beginning as our mother language is harder than English. DS now 6 and DD soon to be 4 have picked up a lot through TV and outside. DS started preschool at 4.5 and DD at 2 and this is how they learnt English. DS started school at 5 and never had any problems. When we do homework we speak to him in English, otherwise it is always mother language. After a year of school you can tell that DS's first language is English, he has no accent at all (never had) and is great with reading/writing as well.</p>
5	BlancheNeige	16 May 2008	<p>This is a topic that's very close to my heart.</p> <p>Our boys (aged 5 and 3) are trilingual - they speak English with me, Italian with their father and French at pre-school/crèche and with their friends in the neighbourhood. We felt that it was important for them to have a basic grasp of both English and Italian even if it turns out that French becomes their dominant language once they start school. We have always attempted to read to them in each language and to let them know that</p>

			<p>being multilingual is something that's very special.</p> <p>There are a lot of myths out there about language-learning but I really think that there's no need to be overly concerned about your child not learning English - children are amazingly adaptable and they will pick up languages through playing with other children. My personal view is that it would be a pity for him (and for you !) if your DS missed out on this opportunity to learn your language.</p>
6	trainee-mum	16 May 2008	<p>we have friends who have raised 2 bi-lingual children. Mum speaks to them in English and Dad in his native tongue. They can understand and speak both.</p> <p>It just takes a little effort.</p>
7	261071v	17 May 2008	<p>Our approach is my parents are the only ones that speak to my daughter in Thai.</p> <p>this is partly because my thai is crappy!</p>
8	Restraint	17 May 2008	<p>Do you speak English at home babybrain? or your mother tongue?</p> <p>Now is the time to start with your little one. It's a great idea and I wouldn't hesitate.</p>
9	Fluker	18 May 2008	<p>I'm not very fluent in my mothertongue so I don't use it with my kids. DH initially only wanted English spoken at home and then 2 years down the track changed his mind and now wants me to speak to them my my mothertongue all the time!</p> <p>My parents speak to them in our mothertongue and when I'm with them I try to as well. The girls understand what is said completely and DD1 (3yo) will sometimes respond in mixed language - like using the mothertongue and adding "ing" onto the end of the verb to say what they're doing. DD2 doesn't talk much yet but definitely understands what's going on in both languages.</p> <p>Don't worry about them not being able to socialise - there's a lot more to socialising than spoken language when it comes to kids - body language, mannerisms, gestures - they pick up on everything and will try and</p>

			<p>communicate in whatever ways they can.</p> <p>K</p>
10	ridgeback	18 May 2008	<p>I've been doing quite a bit of research into how to approach this myself.</p> <p>Both DH and I can speak another language and want our children to know how to speak it too.</p> <p>My parents taught us when we were little by ALWAYS speaking the foreign language when at home. We were only allowed to speak English when English speaking guests came over or when we went to school or had friends over to play. At the time, we used to b**ch and moan about it but obviously now I appreciate the fact that we know two languages fluently.</p> <p>For my son - who is now 2.5 years old we were wanting to know how we would approach this situation. As we live in Hong Kong - we do not have other friends or family to speak to our son in our mother tongue.</p> <p>From stuff I have read it is recommended that a perfect age to start teaching kids a 2nd or even 3rd language is around 2.5 years. It is also recommended that only one parent speak English to the child and the other parent speaks the foreign language to the child.</p> <p>We are trying this approach and so far, my husband (who we decided would speak to my son in the foreign language) is finding it hard to speak to him all the time in another language when he's so used to speaking to him (and me) in English. I know its going to be hard initially for us all but I really want us to persevere and have both of our kids eventually knowing two languages fluently.</p> <p>Already I can see our son's confusion when DH is reading him a book and pointing out picutres and saying the words in our mother tongue and then DS will look at him and say in English, "No, its a dog" or "No, its a cat" and then my DH is correcting him and I just sit there wondering how this will all come together - it all just seems too hard!</p>

			<p>But hey, our parents did it with us and we'll get there too, it will just take some hard work.</p> <p>Another thing I wanted to add, is that most books I've read on this say that a parent should not "MIX" two languages, and I have to say I have been guilty of this. Sometimes I'll speak to DS in English and then sometimes in our mother tongue and I have to correct myself now so as to avoid further confusion for him as apparently having one parent mixing languages is far too confusing for children.</p>
11	mum17	19 May 2008	<p>Interesting posts everyone! Does anyone have a situation or been in a situation where both the parents speak English but the grandparents who have regular contact, speak a foreign language exclusively to their children? Has this had an impact?</p>
12	ridgeback	19 May 2008	<p>MUM17 - my sister and her husband speak only English to her children and my parents speak to them in our mother tongue when they see them, however apart from my nieces knowing a few key phrases, like, 'Hi, how are you', 'Good thank you', they really have no concept of the language.</p> <p>I guess they would see my parents maybe twice a week? Obviously its not enough time for them to pick up the language. Maybe if the Grandparents babysat the children very frequently, this would make more of an impact I think...</p>
13	hamiriver	9 May 2008	<p>We are a bi lingual family. I talk English to the kids and DH speaks his native language. We make no exceptions about this rule to not confuse them.</p> <p>They now understand DH language very well. They will talk back to him in English though.</p> <p>My SIL and brother talk to their children in English at home and her parents talk French to the grandchildren when minding them or seeing them. They are still learning and hearing the language though not exposed to it by anyone else.</p>

			<p>Get some books on the topic its fascination to understand how they developmentally process a different language and how they learn it .</p> <p>Another tool you can use is books in your language and DVD etc which will help reinforce the language. Dont be worried if your kids speak back to you in English though. Your child will pick up English also as they go- TV or just being out and about, friends, playgroup, daycare etc. They figure it all out pretty quickly.</p> <p>I wouldnt hesitate to do it at all and it can only be a benefit for your child.</p>
14	ridgeback	19 May 2008	<p>HAMIRIVER...</p> <p>Which language does your husband speak to you in in front of the children... lets say at dinner time, everyone is sitting round the table, does he then speak to the kids in his native language too or do you all just refer back to English. I think thats what we're struggling with the most too, just how DH and I interact in front of the kids... should we all be speaking the native language when DH is involved or just for him to speak it when interacting with the children... its so confusing!</p>
15	babybrain	19 May 2008	<p>Hi All,</p> <p>Great to see so many positive responses to this topic!</p> <p>Initially, I just assumed that I would bring DS up bi- or multi-lingual until I got a few comments on it and started to doubt whether I am actually doing him a favour. I honestly don't do it to create a child I can show off!! Then again I have met plenty of people who tell me they wished their parents would have taught them....</p> <p>As I mentioned in my first post I have been talking Dutch to my DS from day one and I will get more Dutch books to read to him as well (I only have one at the moment and have been translating the English ones I have).</p> <p>My DH is German and doesn't speak Dutch. He sometimes does speak German to DS, but to be honest I</p>

			<p>think he can't be bothered to do it consistently, which is a shame.</p> <p>I will get some more books and surf the net for more info. Until then I'll keep it up the way I am doing things. So I speak Dutch to DS and English to DH. I will also have to remember to speak Dutch to him in front of English speaking people as that is where I slip up!</p>
16	BlancheNeige	19 May 2008	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>Which language does your husband speak to you in in front of the children... I think thats what we're struggling with the most too, just how DH and I interact in front of the kids... should we all be speaking the native language when DH is involved or just for him to speak it when interacting with the children... its so confusing!</p> <p>We do what comes naturally which is DH speaking Italian and I speak English. The children reply in either language - usually Italian if they're speaking to DH and English when they speak to me. It sounds completely artificial and odd when written down but we find that it works fine in practice.</p> <p>Personally, I think that the key to living in a multi-lingual household is to stay flexible. There are no rigid rules about what you 'have' to do, a lot will depend on your particular family and the situation that you're in and that might change over time. Most children can cope perfectly well with learning 2, 3 or more languages and will do so if given the opportunity.</p>
17	musetta	19 May 2008	<p>It is an enormous advantage for a child to be bilingual. The only exception to this is I think sometimes 3 languages can be too much; start with 2, get them established, and then if there's a third language in the mix, it should be OK (I knew a little boy who stopped talking at around 2; his Mum spoke to him in Spanish, his Dad spoke to hime in Italian and his sister spoke English to him. His sister had done fine with the Spanish and Italian...but English was too much!)</p>

			<p>Babybrain, Dutch is much closer to German than English (in terms of aspects of grammar) so if your LO knows Dutch, German will be alot easier... Maybe then your DP will be inspired to get into the picture. And like PP says, babies catch on really fast which language to use with which person.</p>
18	Fluker	20 May 2008	<p>Like with so many other things in life, the 80-20 rule applies here too. You can put in 20% of the effort and your child will get 80% of benefit. But don't not do it for fear of not getting 100% of the benefit.</p> <p>My understanding of the importance of being able to speak more than 1 language is that it enables an individual's hearing and voice can recognise and make more varied sounds. You don't need to be fluent in a language to appreciate the differences. Later on, there's the finer issues of idioms and other cultural aspects of different languages too.</p> <p>It's a bit harder for a child to "code switch" when there's lack of consistency between who speaks what language and chopping and changing between different languages at different times or even mid-sentence! But I think we're talking about "optimal learning" conditions. It seems like a lot of people don't expose their kids to other languages out of fear for not doing it right and confusing the child (I'm in this category).</p> <p>My colleague has a tri-lingual household: he speaks French to his kids, his wife Vietnamese and they learn English elsewhere. I haven't heard any issues apart from the funny stories about the kids trying to use foreign words with their friends who don't have the foggiest what they're on about!</p> <p>Mum17 - I hardly speak to my girls in my mothertongue, but my parents do. I try to when they're around but that's about it (do as I say not as I do!). DD2 who's 18 months, has equal comprehension of both languages. I don't know whether she's slow to start speaking though but notice that sometimes it seems she's not sure what sound to make (which language to speak in). But without words her communication is still quite effective. My parents see them on average every two days.</p> <p>K</p>

19	babybrain	20 May 2008	I have read that kids might start talking a little later, but therefore speak two (or more) languages. So far, I have been consistent when directly speaking to DS except when we have company of people who I would speak english to.
20	PurplePaperFrog	20 May 2008	<p>I was born in Australia, but my parents only ever spoke to me in their mother tongue until I went to school, which meant I didn't know English!!! However I don't remember not knowing English, and apparently I learnt very quickly in a matter of weeks (this meant I was fluent in both languages very easily).</p> <p>Now me and DH are making a conscious effort to only speak to DS in our mother tongue because we know English will come so easily to him. It's very hard because even we get stuck on words and mix English in....but we try!!</p>
21	Snagglepussed	20 May 2008	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>We make no exceptions about this rule to not confuse them</p> <p>I don't honestly believe that they do get confused!</p> <p>My children were both born in Italy. DH and I spoke predominantly Italian at home (I am MT English) and I spoke English exclusively to DD for 4.5 years! She NEVER once responded to me in English and I use to sweat it out thinking she'll never know it!</p> <p>The day we moved from Italy to Aus...at the airport...she blurted out her first full phrase in English to me as they called our flight! I wanted to deck her! LOL But I was ecstatic!</p> <p>DD2 was only 1 when we moved to Australia so her first language is English! DH and I still only speak Italian but I started to only speak Italian to the kids from when we moved! This has now morphed to a bit of each! No confusion yet ot be noted in either of them!</p> <p>DD1 still speaks Italian albeit with an Aussie accent and DD2 CAN'T roll her Rs which I find hilarious!</p> <p>She can understand Italian perfectly and I am in no way</p>

			<p>worried that she won't speak fluent Italian when we go back!</p> <p>But DD2 only started speaking full sentences at almost three. I think, however, that she was selectively mute.....taking it all in!</p> <p>Just do what you feel to be right for you and your situation!</p> <p>Having another language is a great skill and broadens their mind immensely!</p> <p>QUOTE</p> <p>and apparently I learnt very quickly in a matter of weeks</p> <p>When DD1 started school (3 months after arriving) she was a little lost for a few days but she was quickly one of the better readers in the class and excelled.....still is actually!</p> <p>Kim</p>
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Thread 6. OP6, 12 April 2009, Children of non English-speaking parents

OP6	Guest_jagie_*	12 April 2009	<p>DH is from a non-English speaking country. He speaks English fluently and we decided that DS' first language should be English, as he is living and will go to school in Australia. He will learn his father's language when he is a little older, maybe 5. Everyone says now is a good time for him to learn both languages, which I agree with, but I can't help thinking it would be better for him to get English "under his belt" first.</p> <p>Our friends, who are from DH's country, only speak their language to their 2.5 year old DD. The mother has lived here since she was a teenager and speaks English fluently, but chooses not to when she's with her DD. Her DD is exclusively cared for by her grandmother who only speaks the other language</p>
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			<p>and DD doesn't associate with any children outside their country's community.</p> <p>I think the mother is being a bit selfish really, and her DD will have trouble when she starts school. DH disagrees - he says she will learn English at school and doesn't need to know it before then. (Strange that he thinks that really, when he has a different idea for his own child). I think she will be disadvantaged though, as the other kids at school will already be speaking English from the start, and she won't.</p> <p>It would be one thing if none of her family could speak English, but if one of them can, but chooses not to, I just think it's not right. It's none of my business, obviously, but I think it's a shame. WDYT?</p>
1	Bondia	12 April 2009	<p>I agree with your DH - they will pick up English in no time once they are at school. I've been around many kids from non-English speaking backgrounds, and all the children have learnt English fluently simply by hanging around other kids. For the past 3 months I've spent a lot of time with Korean families who have only been here 2 years - their children speak FAR better English than them. I really don't think it's a big issue in the grand scheme of things.</p> <p>FWIW I don't think little kids find it hard to get English "under their belt" while also learning another language. My bro and sis in law speak both German and English to their child and he has no problem with English. Another friend only spoke French to her child for the first year or so, and his English is perfect, if not advanced.</p>
2	frumpus	12 April 2009	<p>No, she will not have trouble learning English at school age. Her parents are taking the best path to her being bilingual.</p>
3	LynnyP	12 April 2009	<p>I haven't had personal experience but from my readings and experience with other families, children will pick up other languages really quickly. When I lived overseas I was acquainted with many bi and tri</p>

			<p>lingual families. If I had your opportunities I would have your husband speak to him in his language and you speak to him in English. By 5 you have missed a lot of the best years.</p> <p>I don't see anything selfish in teaching your child more than one language. I do think it is selfish to deny them this wonderful opportunity to have both languages hard wired in their brain from early childhood. Siobhan goes to pre school with some children of parents fluent in English who only spoke their birth language to the children until 3 when they started pre-school. The children picked everything up very quickly.</p>
4	lexington	12 April 2009	<p>I grew up in Singapore - a multilingual country. My grandma who brought me up only speaks Cantonese, we watch mandarin tv channels sometimes and the rest of my family speaks English. Without formal learning, I could speak and understand these 3 languages. You'll find that children will just pick up languages easily and you will not have an issue of not being able to master English./</p>
5	robhat	12 April 2009	<p>I think you have no understanding of language and how it's learnt... Sorry that sounds rude but isn't intended to be.</p> <p>Many children worldwide learn more than one language at once. My DH also speaks another language as his 1st language and we are teaching our DD both. English will admittedly be her stronger language but so far she is showing signs of understanding whatever we say to her in either language and is very advanced in vocab (she's 16 months) has mostly English words but also many Afrikaans words and knows the word for some things in both languages. It in no way hinders their development and in fact has been shown to give them many advantages over children who only learn one language. People are also right if they tell you it's better to teach them at a young age. Although it is possible to learn a language when older, it is often</p>

		<p>harder and most people never learn to pronounce things correctly. It's best to start before age 1!</p> <p>As for your friend teaching their child only a 'foreign' language... I admit it's not the choice I would make. I would opt to teach both if possible. Do you know why your friend has made this choice? She may mistakenly think her child will be confused if she teaches two languages at once and therefore has chosen to teach her her own native language thinking that she will always learn English at school and won't otherwise have the chance to learn her native language. Many people do this as they are scared of confusing their child with 2 languages but it's really important to them to learn the language they and their family speak. You might be surprised at how well this child will learn English later. It won't really disadvantage her much. The difference might be noticable in the first few years of school, but many immigrant children go on to do very well at English, often topping their classes...</p> <p>You can do what you like and make your own choices regarding your child, but let me encourage you to raise her bilingual. It really won't hurt her, there is lots of evidence and research to prove this (so you know, I have a degree in Early Childhood Education and studied this at Uni...) Then you can encourage your friend to do the same. Do some reasearch yourself so you can show her the benefits if her child learning 2 languages together.</p> <p>The only time when it isn't advisable to do this is when the parents don't know one of the languages well enough. Children have to learn at least 1 language well and there have been big problems with well intentioned immigrants who tried to raise their children to speak only English without being able to speak it well themselves. This is very bad for the children's language development and they would have done better to teach them their own 'mother tongue' and left English for school (but they of course don't know this, so it isn't really their fault).</p>
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			<p>We tend to be 'English only snobs' in Australia. Most of us have not had the chance to learn a 2nd language really well or to grow up bilingual. We find it strange and worry that children will get confused... But bilingualism is the norm in many places in the world. Many children grow up learning lots of languages at once... I had a friend whose 3 year old managed 4, all at once, not at all confused... And in most bilingual families in Australia, English is mostly spoken outside the home, at home they speak their own language... So I don't find what your friend is doing to be strange or selfish...</p>
6	dynamitee	2 April 2009	<p>I grew up in a household where both parents spoke little english. Not to blow my own horn, but I ended up having better english skills than most of my friends and have a degree in English literature and writing.</p> <p>I'm ashamed to admit that I haven't made an effort to teach my son my other language and lately, especially with DD's arrival am trying to make a more conscientious effort to speak to them both in in the other language.</p> <p>We have close friends who are Chinese and they speak to their children mainly in (sorry can't remember if mandarin or cantonese). The three year old now fully understands english, the two year is just starting to learn, but still has a little trouble understanding.</p> <p>It's definately not a disadvantage.</p> <p>And shamefully I also haven't encouraged my husband or his family to shower my children in italian. Then they'd have three languages. Ridiculous that I forego giving my children a gift for which others pay good money.</p>
7	papilio	12 April 2009	<p>Oh, I think one of the best gifts a parent can give a child is another language.</p> <p>Dexie's FDCarers speak Mandarin at home. His</p>

			<p>carer told me the other day that it is clear he understands her when she speaks Mandarin, to the same level as English. I was so excited by that and I'd love to foster his knowledge further after he finishes FDC.</p> <p>OP, perhaps get some basic understanding of how children acquire language?</p>
8	.Jerry.	12 April 2009	<p>I work in a school that has many children from non-English speaking backgrounds. I see the whole spectrum of language households.</p> <p>I would not have a child only taught another language in the home and then expect them to do well in English at school.</p> <p>Sure, young children pick up languages more easily than adults do, but you cannot expect immediate proficiency in a language.</p> <p>If the child only learns the other language, they will be five years behind their peers in English at school. We work on the understanding that it can take seven years for a non-English speaking child to catch up to their English speaking peers. There are huge vocabulary deficits in non-English speaking children.</p> <p>I think growing up bilingual is a fantastic opportunity for a child and wish my child had that chance. But please, the child must speak English as well at times in their formative years if they are going to an English speaking primary school.</p>
9	dehalan	12 April 2009	<p>I'm from a non English speaking family background.</p> <p>My choice would be to raise the child with the language other than English.....and English will follow very quickly via outings, socialisation, tv etc. By the time school comes along your son will speak fluent English in a matter of a few months.</p> <p>It's amazing how quickly babies pick up languages....</p>

10	elizabethany	12 April 2009	<p>I would (and will be when the time comes) teaching my children both English and Hungarian. They learn best early on, and once it gets to school age it is harder, and very difficult once you get to adulthood.</p> <p>You have made the exact same choice as your friend, to deprive a child of their best opportunity to learn a second language. They will still be good if they learn at 5 (my father did it), but it is harder for them. If you grow up with two, there is no confusion, but sometimes there is when it is picked up later.</p>
11	niban	12 April 2009	<p>I'm with you DH and TBH, saying that *you* "find it selfish" really gets my goat. Giving a child a second language is a great gift in my book; added to that no matter how fluent your friend's English is, it is not necessarily as natural or easy as her own mother tongue.</p> <p>My mother came from another country and TBH, I think some of the difficulties we've had is that we were not brought up speaking her language. While she is fluent in English there are nuances that I think have caused differences between us. Before we were born I think the plan was for us to be bilingual, at 5 or 6 I remember her trying to teach us - never successful, we always rejected it because it was not "normal" or cool. I have a lot of sadness both for me missing out on the language and culture (while I have spent time there and can speak, it's not fluent or natural) and for her, it must've been so hard seeing her kids grow up with that slight barrier.</p> <p>TBH, instead of judging your friend, I'd maybe be doing some more investigation into language learning and perhaps rethinking how YOU bring up your child...</p>
12	Sambambino	12 April 2009	<p>I have seen the other side. DH's parents are both Croatian however they didn't want their children to be disadvantaged at school so they always made an effort to speak to them in English rather than</p>

			<p>Croatian when at home.</p> <p>As adults neither DH or his sister can speak Croatian fluently which I think is a real shame. They have lost that link to their culture and whilst they understand some of what their parents are saying now when they are conversing in Croatian they can't have a conversation with them.</p> <p>IMO the perfect scenario would be for the children to be exposed to both languages from a young age so that they have the advantage of being up to speed at school but they are also able to keep alive the link to the language of their parents.</p>
13	Still-here!	12 April 2009	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>We tend to be 'English only snobs' in Australia</p> <p>I strongly disagree with this. Maybe it depends where you live, but I raise my kids bilingual (they learn the other language from me and friends, English from DH, family, Kinder etc) and I find people are always telling me how great it is we do this. Never really felt or heard any criticism. Most aussies actually wish they were taught a second language when younger themselves!</p> <p>QUOTE</p> <p>If the child only learns the other language, they will be five years behind their peers in English at school.</p> <p>I think this is highly exaggerated. Have seen kids entering Kinder with no English language at all and picking up heaps in the 2 years they spend there. Thankfully teachers always seem quite supportive and understanding of this and agree that if the parents themselves don't speak English very well, they are better off not to teach it to their kids as they will teach them to speak it poorly. Same goes for any language of course.</p>

14	.Jerry.	13 April 2009	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>I think this is highly exaggerated. Have seen kids entering Kinder with no English language at all and picking up heaps in the 2 years they spend there.</p> <p>I agree that children pick up English quickly once in school, but they cannot be at the same level as children who have had five years of English speaking. I see it every day at work.</p> <p>I am only speaking about families that ONLY speak another language and surround themselves who only speak that language. Those families that surround themselves in English at times, along with nurturing their home language are a different story.</p> <p>I think giving children the gift of a second (or third) language whilst young is wonderful and will stand them in good stead for additional languages later on.</p> <p>We cannot, however, expect instant proficiency in English if it is a new language.</p> <p>Usually by the time children reach secondary school they have caught up to (and often exceeded) their peers.</p>
15	Guest_prometheus_*	13 April 2009	<p>I'd seriously be having your DH speak his language to your little one and you speak English to him. I know quite a few multi-lingual families that do this and the children have no problems. The earlier you start is best.</p>
16	gizboo	13 April 2009	<p>I speak to my children 90% of the time in Spanish. My eldest two are at the same level of speech as their peers in English. They rarely speak Spanish, but they understand everything. I'll ask questions in Spanish, and they'll answer back in English.</p> <p>I was brought up the same way, my GP's & father speaking Spanish, (My mother is Swedish, and spoke English to my bro & I) and I don't even know the difference when languages are changed, everything just gets processed the same way. I hope my children will have the same experience.</p> <p>The area I grew up in is very multicultural (Sydney's</p>

			Sth West) and a lot of children were brought up the same way, or only in their parent's native tongue, and a lot struggled those early years, but were up to par by senior primary.
17	slummymummy	13 April 2009	<p>Kids are amazing. I remember learning Italian at age 9 and I picked it up. The younger you are, the easier it is to catch up. I used to go and chat to our neighbour and he loved it because his granddaughter refused to learn Italian.</p> <p>I think it would be far worse if their parents did not speak their native language at home at all. That would be sad.</p> <p>Also this is the norm in some European countries. I remember dealing with the people in our Basel office in our my job and the guy I had the most to do with was French, his assistant was German and other team members were Swiss.</p>
18	roni-b	13 April 2009	<p>They may very well pick up English within a few months of being at school, but what of the kid's utter confusion for those months as they try to figure out what is expected of them? What of the teacher who has to take time out from their class structure to try and make any instructions understood? What of the other kids who want to make friends with them but can't play as effectively because the communication is hindered? It is far better that the kids learn both languages simultaneously at home before going to school. I think it is inherently selfish to say "The teacher can deal with it".</p> <p>Similarly for you, take heed of PPs who have pointed out that language acquisition is different and easier for very young children and babies, than it is for older kids and adults. Wouldn't you like to give the gift of a second language to a kid at a time when they don't actually have to do any work to get it?</p>
19	Feral*Spikey*	13 April 2009	<p>Subductive bilingualism.</p> <p>No one has mentioned this rather interesting problem with being bilingual. It means that learning 2 languages at one, has a negative impact on the</p>

			<p>acquisition of both languages.</p> <p>Have been in speech therapy for months as a result, so that DD won't be disadvantaged in comparison to her peers when starting school. Remember, Primary school is the foundation upon which all else is laid. If you miss the key messages, you have a very hard time catching up! It can be done, but MOST don't catch up, and drop out.</p> <p>Nonetheless, bilingualism is a good thing. We are a bilingual household, and really enjoy that.</p>
20	miriams	13 April 2009	<p>Each to his own but I don't think are that you are doing your child any big favours by speaking only English to him until he is five. As PP's have said, the preschool years are when they are most receptive to learning new languages. If your DH decides to only speak to him in his language and you speak to him in English, he can easily learn both and distinguish between them as well. I'm so envious of the PP who said her child can understand Mandarin because of FDC. We were living in a very Chinese area and my daughter was picking up bits and pieces but since we've moved, she's pretty much lost it now She knows some Spanish and Hindi.</p>
21	bmac	13 April 2009	<p>Excellent advice from lots of ladies here.</p> <p>The earlier the better and waiting till 5 is counter-productive. I understand your concern about English not being mastered, but the best way to do this is to ensure one member of the family always speaks in English (ie you) while those that have the other language, always speak that language with your DS.</p> <p>Consistency is key.</p>
22	taki	13 April 2009	<p>Hi all,</p> <p>just to add another perspective on this. My household is also bilingual in the way that DH and I are from Serbo-Croatian background and this is our native language and is mostly used at home. DS started preschool at 4.5 and kindi at 5, so he had</p>

			<p>6 months of real exposure to English, apart from TV and such. When I enrolled him at school, I had to put down what is his knowledge of English and I seriously did not know as at that time he refused to converse in English with us. School admin lady made a snide remark and questioned why did I not teach him at home..I was astounded and did not know how to respond to this. All that said, he never needed any language help at school and is on par with the rest of his classmates.</p> <p>DD started preschool at 2 and this year started kindly at 4.5. She is also doing well. My kids converse in English only when interacting with each other as it is an easier language to do so.</p> <p>We now have problem with DS responding to us in Serbo-Croatian, he finds it hard, but we try to play translating games etc..</p> <p>Also another example would be my nephew, who came to Australia at 8, he learnt a tiny bit of English overseas in school, but that did not help much. After a year of primary school here, he achieved the best test result in English his school has ever had in his age group.</p> <p>What I'm trying to say is that, bilingual kids might grasp the idea of grammar and spelling easier as well.</p> <p>If you want your child to eventually know your DH's native language and to use it, not just understand it, you might want to start teaching him/her ASAP.</p>
23	micallep	13 April 2009	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>No one has mentioned this rather interesting problem with being bilingual. It means that learning 2 languages at one, has a negative impact on the acquisition of both languages.</p> <p>I recall a speech therapist stating that this may have a slight impact on some kids earlier on but would even out in the long run. For this reason, I</p>

			<p>specifically instructed my family only to speak to DS in English (I made the decision as DS was born slightly preemie and I wanted to avoid anything additional that may cause any developmental delays).</p> <p>A decision that I regret now because I find DS more hesitant to speak in Chinese compared with DD.</p> <p>With DD I was a lot more laid back and my family and her nanny all speak to her in 2 different dialects of Chinese and this has posed no issues to her speech development. It's amazing how children automatically can discern who they should be speaking to in what language. My DH who is not Chinese sees all of this and thinks it's absolutely amazing that our kiddies can translate for him if he needs to say something to our nanny.</p>
24	papilio	13 April 2009	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>No one has mentioned this rather interesting problem with being bilingual. It means that learning 2 languages at once, has a negative impact on the acquisition of both languages.</p> <p>I see the negative impact being far, far outweighed by him learning two languages.</p>
25	Ashanti	3 April 2009	<p>Both DH and I were born in Australia, however our parents were born in Croatia. Subsequently we were both raised to be completely fluent in the Croatian language, we can also both read and write in Croatian.</p> <p>As a result of our upbringing, DS knew very little of the English language until he was about 4 and started child care, 1 day per week. Within 6 months of child care, he pretty much was fluent in English as well as Croatian.</p> <p>DD is not as "good" at speaking Croatian as her big brother, simply because DS comes home from school preferring to speak in English so she is picking up a lot from him. I am ensuring that DD is exposed to even more of the language through my grandmother (who only speaks Croatian), we have</p>

			<p>also asked that their grandparents only speak to them in Croatian.</p> <p>We try to primarily speak croatian in the home to our children. We figure that as they live in Australia, they will always be exposed to the english language.</p> <p>We really believe that we have given our children a gift, in being bilingual, it is so easy for DH and I, why would we not pass this knowledge onto our children.</p>
26	Rubixx	13 April 2009	<p>I think the parent needs to tread carefully here. You can't just only speak to the child in their native language otherwise they may miss out and be behind in their first year of schooling.</p> <p>My grandma looked after my brother as a baby and when he started school he had to go to an ESL school for Kindergarten. His english was not very good and he's Australian born. He was advised by his pre school teacher to go to the ESL school as he could not understand English very well.</p>
27	JustSmileAndNod	13 April 2009	<p>I disagree with you OP about waitng to learn your husbands language.</p> <p>It has been shown that in the first four months of a childs life, the baby picks up sounds and intonation for their parents language and this helps them to be bilingual in the long run.</p> <p>My Husband is from a non-english speaking background - moved to Australia when he was three. He does not speak English to our children, only his own language, and I speak English to them. His grandparents see our daughter every week aalso only speak their own language.</p> <p>My daughter is good to advanced in her english language development, and comprehends her other language extremely well. She is in no way behind in language development. My understanding is that</p>

			<p>some children will be if bilingual, but all catch up by primary school.</p> <p>I feel getting into the habit of speaking your husbands language to your children will only be a good thing, the earlier the better. It is not selfish for families to keep up the tradition of their own language.</p>
28	Lyric	13 April 2009	<p>There has been study after study showing that children who are raised bilingually from birth do better academically than their monolingual peers. You are doing your child a disservice by not offering the opportunity to have two true first languages.</p> <p>In my work as a preschool teacher I have taught several bilingual children and one who was being raised with three languages - Mandarin, Vietnamese and English. Although they may have some initial delays and some confusion, this very quickly resolves itself and is in no way a reason not to do something that is so beneficial.</p> <p>As for your how your friends are choosing to raise their child, it's none of your business.</p>
29	Feral*Spikey*	13 April 2009	<p>Actually, subductive bilingualism doesn't result in just a <i>small</i> delay - it can put a child back several years. Not every child experiences it, but it is something to watch for.</p> <p>This is my personal experience in dealing with a Mandarin and English speaking child at home - my DD, whose environment includes both languages at home and at preschool. Obviously, you need to address that if it is a problem. Still, regardless of the need for speech therapy, I think the more languages the better.</p>
30	BurningBright	13 April 2009	<p>I grew up in a family that spoke 3 languages at home - there was no developmental delay as per my parents and teachers.</p> <p>My daughter is 2yrs old - and we speak 2 languages at home - she speaks and understands both - if you</p>

			<p>speak to her in English - she answers in English - and when I speak to her in Hindi - she answers in Hindi.</p> <p>I am not sure about developmental delays - but will keep a lookout.</p>
31	rodent	13 April 2009	<p>We had great plans to raise our boys bilingual (English/Hebrew) but when my 1st son was born, my husband just never spoke to him in Hebrew and I don't know it well enough. We use the odd word and they are around it sometimes but not enough and they don't really understand it.</p> <p>Our first son is speech delayed (#2 still says nothing so likely is too) so we've been reluctant to introduce it at the moment. I must discuss it with my husband again, maybe when this next baby is born we can introduce it (#1 will be 2y8m, #2 will be 19m), or when #1 turns 3 at the latest. Hopefully it's not too late. I definitely think it gives them an advantage to have both from early on.</p> <p>--Rodent</p>
32	Tiffy	14 April 2009	<p>Hi,</p> <p>This is my experience with a child speaking 2 languages.</p> <p>I have to agree that the child needs consistency. With DS1, I was consistent, always speaking to him in French, so did DH. When DS1 started school, he couldn't speak english and yes, he did have a difficult start. But by the 1st term of Year 1, he has caught up the average student and in Year 5, is now on top of the class.</p> <p>Now with DS2, we were not consistent, we even sent him to childcare, then preschool from 18months to learn English.</p> <p>I completely regret it as he can't speak French... never picked it up. I still speak to DS2 in French but he will always reply back in English. He is now interested in speaking French but it's way too hard for him now.</p>

			<p>My future niece/nephew is going to be very lucky as the Dad will always speak in French and the Mum in another language, and the kid will pick up English at school.</p> <p>Tiff</p>
33	KristyMum-	14 April 2009	<p>many Indigenous Australian children know three languages before they begin to learn English. They may not have spoken English much at home, but like anyone else with any other background other than English, with a good 'teacher' English will be picked up.</p> <p>We had one child who spoke mostly Hebrew and another who knew only German start in DD1's class. They're doing pretty well with their English now.</p>
34	Feral-Lausii	14 April 2009	<p>My children are fluent in tongan. They have had it spoken to them since they were in the womb. I speak english to them, their father and all the family only ever speak tongan.</p> <p>They did not have any problems starting school, and I love the fact that they are fluent in another language. I have found it so difficult learning, yet they just picked it up as easily as they did english.</p>
35	-Emissary-	14 April 2009	<p>I don't get why the mother is selfish?</p> <p>However, I find it weird. Why is she not allowing her child to learn both language. I find that I sometimes juggle both languages when speaking to DS. It's just easier.</p> <p>My brother was born here and yet he was set back in English. I was raised here but went on to do extension one English (I have shocking grammars though). Same household. Same languages taught to the both of us. I think its a weird situation but I definitely don't think the child is disadvantaged by any means.</p>

			Maybe the mother just wants her child to be fluent and stronger in the other language first. It's too common amongst my friends to not be fluent in their native languages and not many of them embraces it.
36	GeraniumQueen	14 April 2009	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>As I said in my post there will be a slight delay in the child speaking but when they start speaking they will be able to speak in both languages. Consistency is the key.</p> <p>this has not been my experience.</p> <p>Our son, yes, but definitely not our daughter. She was speaking in 4/5 word sentences in both languages at 18 months...</p> <p>In my experience it depends on the child, if they are going to have difficulties with speaking/language/literacy they will have those anyway, but if they have a "feel" for language then they will do extremely well.</p> <p>Our son now at just turned 9 still struggles a bit in literacy (not worse than others in his class though) but is a walking dictionary and can translate most words for you into either language.</p> <p>I believe it is a real gift to your children to bring them up bilingually if you have the opportunity.</p>
37	pundelina	14 April 2009	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>I think growing up bilingual is a fantastic opportunity for a child and wish my child had that chance.</p> <p>More exposure to both languages early will maximise your child's ability to be fluent in both.</p> <p>Language acquisition theorists seem to agree on an early critical period, your child is smack bang in this period of his life. What a wonderful gift you could give him.</p>
38	Tombi	15 April 2009	My husband grew up in Sydney and spoke exclusively Spanish until he started school. He had no problems learning English once he went to school.

			<p>Our 4 year old is fluent in English and Spanish and in our experience the earlier you introduce new languages the better.</p> <p>I agree with the poster who respectfully said that you don't really seem to have a good knowledge of how languages are learnt. Without being patronising, I think it would be beneficial for you to do more research before being too set in your ideas and especially critising how the other family is approaching their situation. (Calling them selfish!) I am more sceptical of your approach, than this other family's methods, to be honest.</p> <p>In an English speaking country, learning English would almost come automatic, whereas the "foreign" language would be much harder, so therefore focusing on the harder of the two first makes sense to me.</p> <p>Our situation is opposite, we focus on speaking good English with our daughter as she is in a Spanish school with Spanish friends and we don't have to put in any real effort to help her with Spanish. Teaching her good English at home by speaking and reading is our job at home at this stage.</p>
39	Mariamsmum	15 April 2009	<p>I grew up in a non-English speaking household and when I went to school neither I, or any of my siblings, knew a single word of English. However, once at school, we all picked up the English language so quickly, there were no developmental delays and we all have completed university degrees.</p> <p>Now I am ensuring that my language and background is passed on to my son.</p> <p>My DH is Asutralian and speaks only English to him. DS also goes to daycare twice a week and is thriving in both languages.</p> <p>Like many of the PPs, I think you are doing a disservice to your son by not exposing him to your</p>

			<p>husbands language</p> <p>and to call your friend selfish shows how little you understand about language development.</p>
40	Guest_jagie_*	15 April 2009	<p>The reason I said the mum was selfish was because she says she doesn't consider it important for her DD to learn English before starting school and because she (the mum) was used to speaking her own language at home with her DH, before DD came along. So I don't think she's doing it with the child's best interests in mind. Perhaps "selfish" wasn't the best choice of words, but that's how it looks to me. Perhaps we just have a different priorities.</p> <p>I still think it's best for children (or my child, anyway) to learn some English before going to an English speaking school (with or without a foreign language at the same time). No amount of "expert" opinion is going to change my mind on that - sorry. Obviously if others want to do something different, that's up to them.</p> <p>If DH had wanted to teach DS his language as well as English from year dot, I would have had no problem with that. But he didn't. DS does hear the second language when DH's friends and family come over and he has picked up a few words. We are not actively teaching him it though (or not until he's a little older anyway).</p> <p>The father of the girl dropped out of English classes after a couple of months, saying it was too hard. I know it is hard to learn a new language as an adult, but it annoys me when he then says he hasn't got a job because Australians are racist.</p> <p>I'm also annoyed that we had to have 2 separate birthday parties for DS because DH's family and friends don't feel comfortable socialising with Australians/English speakers. They refuse to socialise outside of their own community and there is this whole "us and them" thing happening, which is all of their own making. I have lived in foreign</p>

			countries and have enjoyed learning the language and getting to know the locals. Anyway, this is turning into a vent now, so I'll sign off. Thanks for your thoughts.
41	Rubixx	15 April 2009	I remember my ex telling me that when he started school he couldn't understand the other kids as his parent always spoke to him in their language. He went to a normal primary school but had to take on ESL classes to catch up on his English.

Thread 7. OP7, 14 October 2009, To deal with two languages any idea?

OP7	aababy	14 Oct 2009	<p>DH and myself both have English as second language. so we are wondering what we should (or shouldn't) do in terms of DD's language devlops. She is 14 mth now. We do want to her to be bilingual (English and Chinese) for sure. Have asked friends around, some said that just speak the native language at home as they will pick up English very quickly in childcare etc. But will it too late? If we teach her both languages same time, since she is too young to differentiate (sp?) them now ,will this make her confused with the two systems later on? For now we don't do anything in particular, e.g. she says "apple" ,"nana (for banana)" etc, maybe because they happen to be easier in English.</p> <p>Any idea well appreciated. thanks.</p>
1	GeraniumQueen	14 Oct 2009	<p>Hi there,</p> <p>there have been quite a few topics on this recently, if you do a search for "bilingual" afew come up</p> <p>this is one of them</p> <p>HTH and good luck, it's hard work but very worth it!</p>
2	Guest_cathode_*	14 Oct 2009	<p>I was raised bilingual (Italian / English) and I still use italian words to describe things ~people look at me strange~ especially as I don't speak italian anymore. I stopped speaking Italian in primary as I was teased for not "speaking right" and the predominant Italian speaker in the home passed away.</p>

			<p>I wouldn't of changed it though as it helped me communicate with my grandmother.</p> <p>I think it is great for people to be bilingual, but I think it does have to be in balance. Kids will learn outside the home, but they learn by example as well.</p> <p>I would speak the primary language at home AS WELL as the secondary.</p> <p>Children will adapt regardless</p>
3	maeby	14 Oct 2009	<p>We're facing a similar problem, except our baby hasn't been born yet. What we are planning to do is take the one-parent-one-language approach (google it! Heaps of info around) and have me speak english (my native language) to the baby, my husband speak german (his language), and I'm also considering whether we should try to introduce french too (maybe husband and I speak french to each other) because we live in a french-speaking town. I don't know, maybe the third language is too much. The point is, though, that if we each speak a different language with the kid, and fairly strictly, it should hopefully make it easier for him/her to keep the two languages separate and clear.</p> <p>Would that work for you? If one of you chose to speak only english with the baby? Normally the parent speaks their mother tongue to the child, but from your post you sound like you are perfectly fluent in english as well.</p>
4	GeraniumQueen	14 Oct 2009	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>I would speak the primary language at home AS WELL as the secondary.</p> <p>This is actually not necessarily the best thing to do, it's usually easier for them if they have the constancy and parents not switching back and forth between 2 languages.</p> <p>Our kids have no problem with english whatsoever and no accent at all either, they picked it up from everywhere</p>

			else without a problem (of course we also speak english at home if we have visitors)
5	GeraniumQueen	14 Oct 2009	Maebby, the one parent one language is great if you have different languages as mother tongue, if both have the same native language though I think both speaking that with the kids is the better option
6	TheSmithFamily	15 Oct 2009	<p>HI there,</p> <p>I find this so interesting and only wish I had a second language to share with my children.</p> <p>Children will definitely adapt and as far as the "best " way to do it it might have to be a personal decision after alot of research I guess.</p> <p>QUOTE</p> <p>if both have the same native language though I think both speaking that with the kids is the better option</p> <p>I agree.</p> <p>From many years working in Early childhood I have worked with many many families with English as their second language. From my experience parents would speak to their children in their native language and the children would pick up English easily through social experiences. I did a lot of work with first time Vietnamese Mums who also seemed concerned about their children learning English so they often would join local playgroups to interact with the English language as such.</p> <p>When we were recently on holiday in Vietnam we were playing in the pool and I was talking to a little girl around 7 years of age. She was living in Hong Kong at the time with her parents. Her father was Swiss and her mother was French. It was so amazing and beautiful to see her talk to many people in the 4 languages she knew! She was able to easily switch depending on who she was talking too. She would talk in German to her Dad, French to her Mum, English to me, She was</p>

			<p>learning Mandarin at school too. She was very proud of the fact that she had so many different ways to communicate with people. I would just watch in awe</p> <p>Bron</p>
7	dixieflatline	15 Oct 2009	<p>Our two daughters are being raised to learn both English and Spanish. The approach we've taken is that my wife and I speak English to our children and their maternal grandmother speaks Spanish to them. The key is consistency - ensuring that the language from a parent or guardian remains the same. We chose not to have my wife speak Spanish to our children because her Spanish isn't fantastic and we thought it might confuse our children if their mother is speaking Spanish to them and their father is speaking English to them.</p>
8	robhat	15 Oct 2009	<p>We are raising our DD (currently 23 months old) and any future children bilingual. My husband speaks Afrikaans as his mother tongue, I speak English. I have learnt Afrikaans to a very good level and we do speak it at home, especially when extended family are around, but mostly I speak English to DD and DH speaks Afrikaans. Our little girl has learnt English very well, has a huge vocabulary which must be around 200-300 words now (I've lost count) and is speaking in 2 and 3 word sentences, sometimes more... Her Afrikaans isn't as advanced as she gets less exposure, but she has at least 50 words, maybe 100 and does speak in 2 and 3 word sentences. Obviously having exposure to 2 languages isn't hurting her! I might add that she almost never mixes the 2 languages and only tries to speak Afrikaans to her Father and Grandparents... At this stage there are a few words for which she only seems to know the Afrikaans for and she will use those instead of the English, but she seems very aware that there are 2 separate languages in our house and she knows which one is which... I can tell because at dinner she will turn to DH and say "Lekker kaas, Pappa!" and then look at me and say "Nice cheese, Mamma!" Also, if I'm teaching her the name of a new object, she will then go and ask her father what he calls it...</p> <p>I think people often underestimate what children can and</p>

			<p>can't do. There are children all over the world who learn 2, 3 or even more languages simultaneously. The most important thing to know is that children must acquire at least one WHOLE language (I learnt about this at Uni when studying Early Childhood Education). They must be able to use one language completely for expression etc otherwise they will have gaps in their understanding of how language works and also may not be able to express certain things. What this effectively means is that parents should always teach their children their native language. This does depend on how well the parent has learnt a second language, but if a parent tries to teach a child ONLY English when they are not experts at it themselves, there may be problems with the child learning English effectively and probably with learning any language...</p> <p>So my only advice to the OP is... DON'T stop speaking Chinese with your child. She needs this language to help her learn other languages and this is the language you are best equipped to teach her. If you want to include some English, this would be OK, but given that it isn't the 1st language for either you or your husband, be careful how you do it. If I were you I would, at this stage, stick to speaking Chinese at home, but (if you want) speak English when you are out, especially with English speaking people, so when you go shopping maybe... It might be good for you to find a playgroup or similar where you can both socialise and be exposed to English. You could also get some English books and read those, especially basic picture books so that she can learn simple words like 'cat' and 'apple'. But on the whole, don't worry too much about her learning English. She will most likely learn it fine at school. It's good if children can learn languages young, but not necessary. I learnt Afrikaans at 20!</p>
9	aababy	16 Oct 2009	<p>For everyone, a big thank you - Xie Xie!(and I wish I could say it in German/Italian/Spanish/ Vietnamese...)</p> <p>What's happening in the house now is that basically we both speak Chinese to DD on everyday thing like "time to change nappie/dinner/weewee/go out" etc. we also have grandparents helping around so by speaking</p>

			<p>Chinese we can keep the consistency. for entertainment stuff like reading book, watching TV/DVD, we usually do both languages. I agree that our mother tongue will be the primary language in the house and out and about we'll have fun with both. Many friends of mine complained that the kids stopped having fun with learning chinese when they grow up which I think maybe because it is total different system (and the character is even more complicated). But most parents have kept up and they found their hard work well appreciated. So it is hardwork but well worth it.</p> <p>Thanks for the link as well.</p>
10	annodam	17 Oct 2009	<p>Edited by annodam, 02 June 2010 - 01:28 PM.</p>
11	catmeow82	17 Oct 2009	<p>our situation is different. DH speaks both french and english where i only speak english. so right from the start he spoke to dd in french and i spoke in english. apparently consistency is the key. not sure how that works when you both speak languages! DD now says words in both french and english quite well. she now just needs to learn that i don't understand french!!!!</p> <p>dh's parents speak to dd in french and my parents speak to her in english.</p> <p>good luck. learning 2 languages is a fantastic thing as i am sure u know. you might find speech development takes longer but it is worth it.</p>
12	tia2009	18 Oct 2009	<p>All my nieces and nephews and now DS, are multilingual. We didnt make a conscious effort to raise them as such, its just that the grandparents have different first languages and they spend a lot of time with them. Maybe speech and language development is a bit slower but not by a great deal and the benefits of knowing more than one language far outweighs the disadvantages in delayed or confused speech</p> <p>However as soon as they start school they all favour English.</p>

Thread 8. OP8, 03 May 2010, Teaching baby 2 languages And tips, ideas, experience?

OP8	MorTilEn	03 May 2010	<p>Since the birth of my baby boy I have been speaking danish to him - just because it comes more natural to me and because my whole family lives in Denmark.</p> <p>My hubby and I live here in australia and our baby boy obviously hears a lot of english - his father is australain so he only speaks english to him.</p> <p>So the only danish he hears is from me - and even I sometimes speak english to him when being with other people because I don't wanne be rude.</p> <p>And now my baby boy is 7 month and it seems like he understands some things in danish and some other in english. - he reacts very clearly when I ask him if he is hungry in danish, but when asked in english he dosen't seem to understand.</p> <p>So I guess my question is if we are confusing our boy? - or will it effect him somehow??</p> <p>I just really want him to understand and speak danish - so should I be really hardcore and ONLY speak danish to him??</p> <p>I'm just getting a bit confused myself I guess So really need some tips or advice...</p> <p>Thanks</p>
1	HRH Countrymel	03 May 2010	<p>Try and speak to him in Danish as much as you can.. my friend did this very thing and the children are very savy in working out whom to speak to in the first language and who the second.</p> <p>A friend of mine raised her son as tri-lingual she spoke one language, her husband another and they lived in a third language country. They were very strict about it and now as an adult he is still fluent in all three - plus a fourth as they moved countries when he was 12!</p>

			<p>He is a very smart cookie and I do think the language skills and dexterous thinking involved in all that changing vocabulary helped him a lot!</p>
2	JustSmileAndNod	03 May 2010	<p>No it sounds great, we do the "one parent one language" style - my Husband only speaks his language to the kids and I speak english. My 3 year old understands my husbands language PERFECTLY now, although she tends to prefer to speak in English which is common. My IL's do not speak english to the kids.</p> <p>You will not confuse him but it is recommended you try and stick to the one language, I would think speaking Danish to him would be the way to go as there will be PLENTY of opportunity for him to learn english. He will hear you speak english when out and about for example, playgroups etc in the future.</p>
3	ecb	03 May 2010	<p>Don't change a thing. It's the best way to ensure your bub learns and understands Danish. He is only 7 months. It's hardly a problem if he doesn't know everything in both languages now. It's not even an issue if he is a few years old. He'll be exposed to SO much English over his life. I wouldn't for a second worry that he may not understand it as well now. I have friends who are Russian and both of them ONLY speak Russian to their 2yr old at home. He gets English at daycare and everywhere else when he is out and about. It's going to take more work to instill the second language. English will do it on its own.</p> <p>ETA - I used to work with a guy who was Aussie and his wife was Japanese although he also spoke fluent Japanese. By the time his daughter, to whom they had both spoken English and Japanese at various times throughout her life to ensure she learnt both, was 4 years old she had it so sussed that she would only speak English to her dad even if he spoke to her first in Japanese and only speak Japanese to her mum even if she spoke to her first in English.</p>

4	Tombi	05 May 2010	<p>We're pretty much a trilingual family. We speak exclusively English with our children when there are more than one other person in our company (eg. Me + Husband + Child = English), when we are alone, we speak our own language with the child (eg. Husband + Child = Spanish). I only speak my language with the children when my mom is around, so the children are really bilingual.</p> <p>Our 1 year old is understanding equal amounts of English and Spanish.</p> <p>I think for you, if you stick to Danish when alone with your child and switching to English when a non-Danish speaker is in your company would work perfectly. Your child will not be confused, it is part of growing up in a bi-cultural family! Your son might mix his language a bit, but they soon work it out. Our 5 year old speaks perfect Spanish and English, with the correct accents without mixing the languages. Up to last year, she was still mixing a bit, or if she didn't know the Spanish word, she would just say it in English with Spanish accent! LOL!</p>
5	Guest_bunjibing_*	05 May 2010	Edited by bunjibing, 19 May 2010 - 12:08 PM.
6	PonyoPonyoFishGirl	05 May 2010	When I was 2-4 years old, some members of my mum's family lived with my mum and dad, and they spoke a different language to dad. Strangely, even now, I can understand every words they are saying, although I can't "speak" it. My brother (who was born when I was 4) and my dad never picked up anything. I was never confused which word belongs where
7	osgirl	06 May 2010	I have been told that each parent should speak their respective mother tongue to their child in order for the child to be bi-lingual. We are expecting our first and I will speak English and my husband will speak Turkish. Our friends are in the same position and even though their child is at home all day with English speaking mum, the child understand what

			<p>you say in English but responds only in Turkish. Stick to what you are doing. It seems to be what the professionals would recommend.</p>
8	MorTilEn	06 May 2010	<p>Thanks so much everyone! - I will keep speaking danish to him</p> <p>It makes me a bit more reassured now and I'm pretty sure he will understand what he wants to understand in every language</p> <p>Thank you for sharing all your views and experince.</p> <p>Bunjibing - I don't think it's ever to late. - Especially when being a child. I was raised in Poland (so speak fluent polish) - then moved to Denmark (so speak fluent danish - wich is my primary language) - and by the age 18 I moved to Spain (and can speak fluent spanish)</p> <p>And NOW I live in Australia and speak english every day.... SO.... it's not impossible...</p> <p>Thanks again everyone...</p>
9	peppidunes	06 May 2010	<p>Both my brother are Australian and married to German women. One family lives in Germany, one in Australia. In both cases my brothers have spoken mainly english with the kids, and the mothers have spoken German. The kids have grown up bilingual with no worries. The ones who live in Aust mix with as many other german kids as possible. The ones in Germany have very little contact with Australians but are very proud of their 50% Aust heritage.</p> <p>Things will work out in the long run!!</p>
10	Snagglepussed	06 May 2010 -	<p>Absolutely keep it up! They do not get confused!</p> <p>We speak Italian at home and I spoke English to both girls (born in Italy)...</p> <p>My DD1 only spoke Italian for the first 4 years of her life, even though I only spoke English! When we moved here she was fluent in a week! So it was</p>

			<p>ALL going in even though at the time I desparied it wasn't!</p> <p>DD2 was 1 when we moved back to Oz so hubby and I only speak Italian at home! She understands everything but refuses to speak! I am not worried as I know it's in there somewhere!</p> <p>QUOTE</p> <p>he reacts very clearly when I ask him if he is hungry in danish, but when asked in english he dosen't seem to understand.</p> <p>This is perfect proof that he is not confused! He won't understand "Are you hungry?" in English as you don;t say it to him and his father probably doesn't use those phrases! He knows the difference!</p>
11	Guest_Padmé Amidala_*	06 May 2010	<p>My advice is to keep it up!</p> <p>My DH's first language was Italian - it was all they spoke to him at home. He learnt English when he went to School... so they stopped talking to him in Italian?!</p> <p>He's now 30 and he can't speak Italian anymore! He can understand a lot and would pick it up fairly easily if he spent some time in Italy, I'm think.. but it's such a shame that he's not truly bilingual. His extended family still only ever speak Italian and the IL's only speak to DD in Italian.</p> <p>Your LOs will always hear English outside the home so I think speaking Dutch at home is imperative, if you want them to be bilingual. What a fantastic opportunity for them.</p> <p>All the best.</p>
12	Feral-Lausii	06 May 2010	<p>My 2 children aged 7 and 9 speak two languages fluently. Have done so since birth. When they are with their father its his language and with me just</p>

			english. Keep it up, its great to have a second language there and a stronger link to their culture!
13	babimuma	06 May 2010	<p>like PP, my children speak different languages, and take longer to start but then the great benefits outweigh the slight longer time to teach.</p> <p>Is good idea I think</p>
14	purple25	06 May 2010	<p>I am the one spending most time with our 9.5 months DS, my approach is speak to him in English for a week, and then my language in the second week and so. When DH/someone else is around, i will speak English, so that they can understand. However, DH will only speak his language to him regardless whether i'm there (i can't speak and don't understand DH's language) as he is only get little time with DS and he wishes DS can master in his language</p>
15	babimuma	07 May 2010	<p>Purple25, very interesting, sounds as your LO will be speaking three language?</p> <p>Impressive</p>
16	a letter to Elise.	07 May 2010	<p>Definitely continue to speak both languages, but if your child will be going to school here, then I think the primary language should be English.</p> <p>I can't remember the sources, but when I was researching ESL (English as a Second Language) for secondary education, I found a number of sources that suggested that learning an alternative language first (other then the primary language for schooling) can cause long term language issues, particularly for written expression and comprehension. This is the case even for those students who are orally very fluent in English. It apparently affects the ability to comprehend deeper levels of language structure.</p> <p>DS will be Bilingual, but English will be the primary language spoken at home for this reason.</p>

17	Guest_jiiiii_*	07 May 2010	<p>We are raising our kids bilingual too, one parent/one language. That's the way it seems to be recommended these days, consistency is key.</p> <p>With that in mind, purple25, I wouldn't go down that path. You're better off keeping your language separate, as in you speak only it to him, while your husband uses his own language - you obviously speak English together? That will be enough for the child to learn that eventually too, especially since English is the dominant language around him elsewhere too. There are plenty of trilingual families out there using this method successfully.</p> <p>Issues raised by PP: I've done a fair bit of research into bilingual children myself, and have never come against any evidence of that sort that would be due to specifically bilingualism, and the choice of a "primary" language. If anything, the research I've read has said the opposite. Multilingual children comprehend language and its structures better, probably because they become more aware of the differences between their languages. Obviously other factors can affect a child's ability to write and read - like, say, never doing either: you can be orally fluent in a language despite only rarely reading a book or writing a sentence, and there's only so much homework by itself can achieve. A child that is good at one language will have no trouble mastering a few others. And they learn them quickly, too, if given the right support. They're not sponges for nothing.</p> <p>I went to primary school with a girl who was a recent immigrant to Finland (for those of you who don't know, there are few languages harder to learn than Finnish...) and knew nothing of the language to begin with, her native tongue was about as far removed from it grammatically and structurally as you can get. Yet by the end of the year she in no way stood out from the rest of us, in terms of speaking, reading, writing or comprehending the language. FWIW she went on to top scores in most subjects by year 12, including about 3 languages.</p>
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			<p>As another aside, I also remember going to school with a boy whose mother spoke English to him, and father Finnish. The poor kid took a while to stop talking to ALL women in English, and all men in his father's language - but he got there in the end! Didn't take him that long to figure it out, either.</p>
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Thread 9. OP9, 22 September 2010, Bi-lingual baby. Tell me your experiences.

OP9	Mille-Mille	22 Sept 2010	<p>Sorry i dont know where to put this post...</p> <p>My partner is Norwegian (baby was born in Norway) and i'm Australian, we are moving back to Aus soon and we really want to make sure she can speak both languages as she grows up. Obviously English wont be a prob since we will be in Aus, but i'm worried her Norwegian will suffer since only her Dad and Grandparents (on the phone) will be speaking Norwegian with her.</p> <p>I'd love to hear of your experiences with this, is it true they pick up languages slower since they are learning two instead of one?</p>
1	Lokum	22 Sept 2010	<p>I'm interested in this too. I have heard that they actually receive language (understand and can respond with behaviour) at the same rate as other babies, but may be slower to talk. Once they get started though, both languages come out just fine.</p> <p>However, I am not sure about how it works when the child only hears one person speak the language to them, and they don't see it modelled between other people in front of them. My DH tries to only speak his language, plus we have some books in that language to read to DS.</p> <p>I join in when DH speaks as much as I can (very little!) but DH's brother is here at least once a week, and they speak to DS and each other in their language as well. We're hoping this is enough! My DS is only</p>

			<p>12 weeks, so we can't report on how successful we'll be yet.</p> <p>I know a child in China who has a nanny who speaks Mandarin, a mother who speaks English and a father who speaks Arabic. Mostly the parents speak English to each other, and the child goes to a Chinese preschool, so his Chinese and English are excellent, but his Arabic is quite OK. He's had no problems I'm aware of, apart from occasionally borrowing a more appropriate word from another language and sometimes forgetting which adult speaks which language!</p>
2	Mille-Mille	22 Sept 2010	<p>Its amazing what babies can learn!</p> <p>I also speak Norwegian (almost fluent), but we decided that i should stick to English and DP stick to His. But maybe i should have Norw. Conversations with her and DP so she can see it in action, since she will be getting English from everyone else. It will be fun to see how she manages</p>
3	G+2	22 Sept 2010	<p>My understanding is children don't learn language slower, as babies are quite capable of managing two languages. The best method is from what I have seen with other bilingual children, is for your partner to strictly (where possible) speak only in Norwegian to your child (and the grandparents as well), read Norwegian books with your child, and then if you can find some way of supporting their learning as they get older? This way the child understands to communicate with dad they must use Norwegian, plus I guess as many extended visits to Norway if possible so they're fully submerged in the language. All the best.</p>
4	Maeby	23 Sept 2010	<p>From what I've heard, consistency is the key. If you're the english speaker, you should always speak english with your daughter (don't dip in and out of english and norwegian when you talk to her), and your partner should always speak norwegian with her. Maybe you could make norwegian the common language between you and your husband as well, to balance out all that english she'll be getting everywhere else.</p>

5	Babatjie	23 Sept 2010	<p>DS is growing up in a bilingual home. I only speak Afrikaans to him, and sometimes DH will as well or we to each other. But since he is English (Australian) he will probably mostly speak English to DS. DS hears about 80% Afrikaans and 20% English at the moment. So he will probably be more Afrikaans for a while until he starts kindy or school and then he will hear English more. Most of the people we're in contact with is Afrikaans (my family).</p> <p>My parents have a 3yo. He goes to child care 5 days a week in English but uses only Afrikaans at home. He did start to speak a little later than some children but now he is able to say whatever he wants in either language. He is also a little stronger in Afrikaans and will sometimes speak Afrikaans at school to his friends but they figure it out quickly.</p> <p>I would encourage you to expose your DD to as much Norwegian as possible, because growing up in Australia she will always have the opportunity to learn English.</p>
6	Mintyfresh	23 Sept 2010	<p>If you're moving to Melbourne the Swedish church near South Yarra Station (can't remember exact location) teaches Norwegian and has a lot of Norwegians associated with it. For some reason 5 years ago my DH who has no links to Norway started learning Norwegian there. He loved it and it's part of the reason we live in Sweden now.</p> <p>Might be worth checking out Norwegian expats on your return to Aus to keep the language around the family as well?</p> <p>I have friends here in Sweden who's daughter is learning both English and Swedish as her Dad is Swedish and her Mum is Scottish. She's almost 18 months old and understands both languages totally fine and is starting to say a few words in each. I think Swedish will win out in the end if they stay here as she'll be exposed to it so much more. My cousins kids are also bilingual (Japanese), but at the ages of about 8 & 10 decided that they didn't want to speak it much</p>

			<p>anymore. But their Mum still speaks to them in Japanese. I think it's awesome to try and maintain bilingual kids. Easier to learn the language as a kid than as an adult or even as an older kid.</p>
7	Treeee	23 Sept 2010	<p>I think it really depends on the child.</p> <p>Obviously the more you expose the child to different languages consistently, the more likely they will learn them.</p> <p>The general consensus seems to be that most children exposed to multiple languages speak a little later, however when they do, they are proficiently bi/tri-(etc)-lingual.</p> <p>Our family seems to have a particular skillset for multiple languages, and DS is the same. He was an early speaker of both languages without any delays (first clear word at 9mnths = tren / train in spanish; speaking phrases in spanish/english by 15mnths). I know of other families that have lots of languages in their backgrounds that have children with similar aptitudes for languages - most young children know how to differentiate between languages & the people that speak them.</p> <p>Keep at it, and try to be consistent - it's a fantastic skill to maintain and learn.</p>
8	Procrastinator5000	23 Sept 2010	<p>Just want to reiterate what others have said, that the best approach (as far as I am aware, and from watching many families) is for your partner to speak only Norwegian, and you only English.</p> <p>Some friends of mine use this method with their girls, whereby Dad speaks English and Mum Danish, and it's been interesting to observe. One cute thing was that Dad would nearly always do bathtime with them, so speak English, so now even if Mum is bathing them, they'll only speak English in the bath, not Danish (Mum's language). It's like bathtime is for English!</p> <p>It's amazing to see how well they cope with the two</p>

			languages, and the interesting ways they make sense of it all.
9	Isobella	23 Sept 2010	<p>Things can vary from child to child.</p> <p>My Brother is married to German Lady. They have spent the past 5yrs living in Berlin/London and Switzerland.</p> <p>My brother would only speak English to the children, my SIL only German.</p> <p>My niece and nephew are 15m apart in age (now nearly 5 & 6)</p> <p>Nephew by 18m of age could speak in long complex sentences in BOTH languages and knew who he could speak German to and who he could speak English to.</p> <p>My Niece although understanding German fully annoys her mother, grandparents (German) and cousins (German) by only replying in English..... she does not speak German at 4yrs of age but fully comprehends it. Her English Development was 'normal'. It is only now between 4-5 yrs of age that she is starting to use a few German words.</p> <p>My just turned 2 niece is speaking some words of both english and german but is not 100% on who speaks what.</p> <p>On the other hand.... my boys (English only) had very little words at 2yrs and by 3 yrs were speaking in long complex sentences.</p> <p>So it can really vary child to child.</p>
10	Snagglepussed	23 Sept 2010	<p>OK, seeing as you are practically fluent in Norwegian I would be talking to her and your hubby in Norwegian at home!</p> <p>My children were born in Italy and I spoke exclusively English with them! We moved to Aus when DD1 was</p>

			<p>4.5 and DD2 was 1.</p> <p>DD1 had NEVER uttered an English word to me.....until we were at Milan airport waiting to board our plane...when they called our flight she looked at me and said "Mummy, can we go now!" I nearly fell of my stool.....</p> <p>She is, to this day (9yo), bilingual....</p> <p>As DD2 was only 1 when we came here we made a conscious decision to speak only Italian at home (DH and I only converse in Italian anyway) and although she does not always speak it she understands everything! She is almost 6 and we went to Italy in July and she started to speak it!</p> <p>I would make the call to talk to her in Norwegian at home as MUCH as you can! I say exclusively but we all know that life often gets in the way!</p> <p>Good luck! Having another language is soooooo good for them! It is harder when the other language is the Father's only but you speak it so don't let it slip!</p> <p>They don't call it Mother Tongue for nothing!</p>
11	Mppj is feral	23 Sept 2010	<p>This is a little different but my kids go to a bi-lingual school where they are only allowed to speak Mandarin for 2.5 days of the week, yet no one in the home speaks mandarin. The school have advised us that it is common that bi-lingual children in this environment to take a little longer to reach literacy milestones, but by grade 3 (about 8 or 9 years old) there is no difference between their skill level in English and a mono-lingual child.</p> <p>90% of the kids at the school start school being bi-lingual or multi-lingual already, with a language other than English or mandarin (i.e. Vietnamese, Arabic etc). The school advises that to keep up their skills in that area that each parent speak their first language to the child exclusively, so if you are primarily an English speaker you do not try to speak Norwegian to her, but that you have a common family</p>

			language (which could be English or Norwegian). That way neither language suffers.
12	Snortle	23 Sept 2010	<p>I am raising my children bi-lingual.</p> <p>DH and I speak 100% (or as close as poss) in our native language to DDs.</p> <p>Our DD1 is 2.5yrs and speaks and understands an astounding amount of English just from TV, songs, nursery rhymes, cousins, other relatives etc.</p> <p>I did find with DD1 that her speech development WAS delayed slightly but this catches up over time.</p> <p>Your children learning English is inevitable, growing up in Aus their English will be as good as any other child at school (Possibly better due to a better grasp of grammar when you are bi-ligual)</p> <p>The challenge will be to keep the non-English language in use!</p> <p>When my DD uses English (eg I want cheese) I acknowlegde what she says and then repeat it in the non-English language to try further her understanding that there is more than one way to say things</p>
13	Guest_Paisley_*	23 Sept 2010	Deleted
14	EnvS	23 Sept 2010	<p>Haven't read all the posts yet so hope I'm not repeating, but I read a study a couple of years back that said children in multi-lingual homes don't necessarily begin speech later than unilingual children, however, they will be unlikely to master either/any of the languages as well as a child who speaks only the one.</p> <p>Having said that, we had all the best intentions of maximising opportunities with language wrt our children in the trilingual environment they are growing up in. However, DS1 understands when spoken to in all 3 languages, BUT 90% of the time responds in english (spoken at home), although throws in words from the other 2. He can almost always distinguish which set of grandparents will understand the basic foreign language words he throws in. And when he's in trouble, we bring out the other languages.</p>

			<p>His speech was not delayed at all and everyone who meets him/talks to him on the phone cannot believe how well he was speaking at 20 months (was even singing "Frere Jacques" and translating it to english perfectly even though that is the only french anyone knows LOL). He has adult conversations at 2.9 now, saying things like "wow! that 4WD just flew past and is going in the opposite direction" and "No mama, I can't give you my gold coins for parking, because I don't have any free. I need them to buy my trains" and "I think this thing is faulty" etc etc. In fact, he is able to make jokes and complain... eg "why can't I open my window - mama's opened hers!" ie uses correct tense</p> <p>I think language development is up to the individual - some are more adept at picking up languages than others - i guess for our kids it will be in the genes as DH and I pick up/studied other languages also...</p>
15	Snagglepussed	23 Sept 2010	<p>There is a member in here whose two boys:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Speak exclusively Italian to their Swiss-Italian Dad 2. Speak English to their Aussie Mum 3. Speak French to one another as they live in the French-speaking part of Switzerland and are schooled there! <p>They flit effortlessly between the three! Beautiful to watch and listen to!</p>

Thread 10. OP10, 04 June 2011, Bilingual toddler – when to start teaching English?

OP10	discodeniz	04 June 2011	<p>Hi i have two toddlers whom i speak Turkish with 99% of the time. I was born and raised in Australia and I am Turkish, and so is my husband and we only speak Turkish to the kids. I do say words like hello, thanks, bye, etc but not much English. WHEN i do speak English they find it amusing. So i cant really take myself seriously. I know some people who wait til school age to teach ENGLISH but i feel thats too late as they learn better now. ANYway what do you think? Thanks!</p>
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1	ragonfly31981	04 June 2011	Why not now? Turn on the TV, go to Playgroup, take them to preschool.
2	noonehere	04 June 2011	not myself but a cousin of mine had one parent speak only english and the other french, he has learnt both fairly well but im not to sure about hows he going now (havent seen him since he was this age)
3	noname2	04 June 2011	<p>I am definitely no expert as am not even bilingual myself. But - I know of a few families who are raising kids bilingual and they have been advised that one parent should speak one language to the kids (eg. you speak Turkish to them) and the other parent should speak the other language (eg. your DH should speak English to them). This is the way to avoid confusing the kids and make sure they understand which words belong to which language. Someone might correct me - but I think the advice is to do it this way from the beginning. I am not sure what language you're supposed to speak to each other under this system though...</p> <p>ETA - snap misssmissus.</p> <p>Also, just remembered I went to an open day at the German School here in Melbourne (where they teach in both German and English) and they have a rule that the native English speaking teachers speak English to the kids and the native German speakers speak German to the kids.</p>
4	tenar	04 June 2011	<p>How old are your children, OP? And do they spend any time at all in daycare or similar, where they are exposed to English?</p> <p>If they are in a bit of daycare or kindy or something like that, I honestly wouldn't worry about it. Your problem (and ours with Spanish, though it's harder for us because only DH speaks Spanish to DD) is more likely to be keeping them speaking Turkish once they get to school and find that their friends only speak English.</p> <p>If they aren't in any daycare, maybe you could try a system where you speak English outside of the home but never inside it. I gather that this works well for some families (not ours, because my Spanish isn't good</p>

			<p>enough). So if you're in a cafe or whatever you are speaking English with them and to others, but if you're alone with them you are speaking Turkish.</p>
5	discodeniz	04 June 2011	<p>QUOTE (dragonfly31981 @ 04/06/2011, 08:33 PM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>Why not now? Turn on the TV, go to Playgroup, take them to preschool.</p> <p>The Tv is on ABC kids almost all day and they do watch movies like toy story and bugs life so they my almost 3 yr old has picked up words, but she talks in Turkish. I am thinking about preschool as soon as she is out of nappies. Thanks for your suggestions</p>
6	jayskette	04 June 2011	<p>I'll be watching this thread</p> <p>In my own experience, my parents waited until I'm fluent in the mother tongue first (preschool years) then started to introduce English... as in "the English name for apple is..." and started showing me what the alphabet looks like etc. I went to a dual language streamed kindy/primary school so even though I knew a little English before starting school, the total language immersion meant that I was fully bilingual by year 1-2.</p> <p>I'd more worried about continuing to speak to my kids in my mothertongue then English, as going to school will take care of the English learning skills/immersion.</p>
7	discodeniz	04 June 2011	<p>QUOTE (noname2 @ 04/06/2011, 08:35 PM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>I am definitely no expert as am not even bilingual myself. But - I know of a few families who are raising kids bilingual and they have been advised that one parent should speak one language to the kids (eg. you speak Turkish to them) and the other parent should speak the other language (eg. your DH should speak English to them). This is the way to avoid confusing the kids and make sure they understand which words belong to which language. Someone might correct me - but I think the advice is to do it this way from the beginning. I am not</p>

			<p>sure what language you're supposed to speak to each other under this system though...</p> <p>ETA - snap missmissus.</p> <p>Also, just remembered I went to an open day at the German School here in Melbourne (where they teach in both German and English) and they have a rule that the native English speaking teachers speak English to the kids and the native German speakers speak German to the kids.</p> <p>This does make sense actually! well my native language would be English and my husbands Turkish as he moved here from Turkey 10 years ago. But since my parents always spoke to me in Turkish it feels strange to speak to my kids in English. Although my husband and I talk to each other in English.....</p>
8	tenar	04 June 2011	<p>QUOTE (noname2 @ 04/06/2011, 08:35 PM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>I am definitely no expert as am not even bilingual myself. But - I know of a few families who are raising kids bilingual and they have been advised that one parent should speak one language to the kids (eg. you speak Turkish to them) and the other parent should speak the other language (eg. your DH should speak English to them). This is the way to avoid confusing the kids and make sure they understand which words belong to which language. Someone might correct me - but I think the advice is to do it this way from the beginning. I am not sure what language you're supposed to speak to each other under this system though...</p> <p>I'm not expert either but I've done a fair bit of reading about bilingualism, since we are raising bilingual kids. The key is that you be consistent. The "one parent one language" model is common because so many families are bilingual because the parents speak different native languages. But there are other models, and the "we speak one language at home and the other outside the</p>

			<p>home" one is, I understand, the next most commonly used one.</p> <p>The main thing to achieve, if you can, is that your kids are exposed to more of the language that they won't get outside of the home. In this case it's Turkish, because presumably the kids will go to school here and interact with the rest of the English-speaking community in Australia. In this situation and given that Australia is so very English-centric, the challenge is going to be keeping the kids speaking their other language as well. Having them learn enough English to be fluent speakers in that should not be a problem at all.</p>
9	discodeniz	04 June 2011	<p>QUOTE (jayskette @ 04/06/2011, 08:39 PM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>I'll be watching this thread</p> <p>In my own experience, my parents waited until I'm fluent in the mother tongue first (preschool years) then started to introduce English... as in "the English name for apple is..." and started showing me what the alphabet looks like etc. I went to a dual language streamed kindy/primary school so even though I knew a little English before starting school, the total language immersion meant that I was fully bilingual by year 1-2.</p> <p>I'd more worried about continuing to speak to my kids in my mothertongue then English, as going to school will take care of the English learning skills/immersion.</p> <p>another good point. i am considering preschool but then after that we are hoping to homeschool, so whatever English they are going to learn needs to come from me.</p>
10	tadpole-bean	04 June 2011	<p>We're a bilingual family. I speak cantonese to the kids and because I'm the main carer it means they are mostly exposed to chinese (spoken word, dialogue, music and now that they're older dvds). I also insist all relatives speak chinese to them too.</p> <p>However it doesn't mean english takes a back seat. My</p>

			<p>partner who also spends a lot of quality time with them speaks english. And they are constantly exposed to english - they hear us speak english together, at the shops, at playgroup, at music, at swimming, at playdates... so you can see it's a pretty healthy balance. Because there is so much exposure to english, I deliberately chose to speak chinese.</p> <p>My son is now 4. He is fluent in both. His verbal skills are more dominant in chinese but his listening skills are probably the same (I know because his translation of english into chinese is spot on). At 2, his Chinese was definitely more dominant but now you wouldn't know.</p> <p>To be honest I think his english will eventually surpass his chinese but I hope he retains both. He does have a love of languages (he will ask me words in spanish and french) fostered during a stint of travelling. The travel made him realise how important language abilities are - and he has a friend who is trilingual anyway mum- spanish, dad - french, english exposure listening to her parents conversations.</p> <p>I have read it is best to start as NB - parallel language acquisition is meant to get the proper neural synapses firing away making all languages easier to learn, though the author said that sequential language acquisition is still great as, really who cares how it's done as long as they have 2 languages anyway!</p> <p>Goodluck!</p>
11	Lokum	04 June 2011	<p>QUOTE (tenar @ 04/06/2011, 08:41 PM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>... But there are other models, and the "we speak one language at home and the other outside the home" one is, I understand, the next most commonly used one.</p> <p>The main thing to achieve, if you can, is that your kids are exposed to more of the language that they won't get outside of the home. In this case it's Turkish, because presumably the kids will go to school here and interact with the rest of the English-speaking community in</p>

			<p>Australia. In this situation and given that Australia is so very English-centric, the challenge is going to be keeping the kids speaking their other language as well. Having them learn enough English to be fluent speakers in that should not be a problem at all.</p> <p>So we're working on one parent - one language as well. My other language isn't good enough for one-at-home and one-out-of-home, but also because we know of other families who've taken this approach.</p> <p>I think what often happens with common community languages (such as Turkish) with a relatively recent migrant population (ok, 35 years of Turks in Australia, but still), that using the language at home is a sign of 'old' ways, and the 'old' culture, and children are keen to look cool and use the cool language (English) at school. I think this is particularly exaggerated if their entry to school is complicated by needing to learn English, and if the parents' behaviour suggest that the community language is something private, to be concealed or kept for home. The kids we know who spoke Turkish at home and English at school quickly lost Turkish. Their parents still speak to them in Turkish but they always reply in English and their Turkish is terrible.</p> <p>We also know of an Italian family where this happened. The mother, out of consideration for others and to seem polite, allowed the first child to speak English when around non-Italian speakers. Italian quickly became tainted, and the child refused to speak Italian in the presence of anyone else, and gradually to speak it at all.</p> <p>With the second child, the mother spoke exclusively Italian to the child, whatever the circumstance. If necessary, she would explain to others in English what was happening, but to the child she spoke Italian. The second child maintained her Italian much better. The father only spoke English in that family.</p>
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12	discodeniz	04 June 2011	<p>Another point id like to add is that sometimes someone says something to her in English she says a sharp "nah" like 'i don t agree'. its funny we were at an ikea showroom and she was playing in one of the kids bedroom showrooms with a couple other kids around her age, well a bit older, they were playing with a giant spider pillow, and he kept saying something to her and she kept responding with "nah" because she didnt understand and then the boy came to me and said "my dad says that spider are dangerous and that we shouldnt touch them, is that true?" and i said "yep thats right" and he turned to my daughter and said "SEE!" the looked at me again and said "she says no" haha it was funny</p>
13	robhat	04 June 2011	<p>We're raising a bilingual child and I have a teaching degree. I have tried to read as much as I can find on raising bilingual children, but it isn't an exact science!</p> <p>With any language learning, the younger, the better. Children actually learn to differentiate between the sounds in their own language and those in others by the time they are 1 year old and will soon stop 'hearing' the sounds from languages that are not relevant to them. This is why adults can struggle to pronounce a foreign language as well as a native speaker. I know myself, having learnt my DH's language as an adult that there are certain sounds in his language that I simply can't 'hear' and some sounds that I have had to be taught how to say by being shown how to form my mouth etc because I simply can't hear that I'm saying them wrong! How much this will be a problem though will vary depending on the languages involved and what age children start learning etc. I live in an area with many immigrants and in many cases their children do not start learning English much before they start school. Most of them have very little trouble acquiring good English with almost no accent before they reach high school.</p> <p>As PP's have mentioned, there are a number of ways of raising bilingual children. We do the one parent one language method because Afrikaans isn't my native language. I am conversationally fluent, but not totally fluent and as such would not be able to teach my DD the language properly. As a result, English is by far my DD's</p>

		<p>stronger language as she is exposed to it all the time. Her father only has a few hours each evening after work to spend with her during the week. Nevertheless, at 3.5 years old she quite obviously understands anything he says to her in Afrikaans and has a vocabulary that would only be about a year behind had it been her only language, so that's not too bad. She has now also reached a stage where she can talk about the languages and compare them. I can also explain to her that something is in a 3rd language like French and she has some concept of what I'm talking about. I know another family with a younger boy who speak Afrikaans only at home as they are both Afrikaaners but speak English outside the home. His Afrikaans is much better than my DD's but I'm not so sure about his English. His mum says his English is good, but he will only respond to me if I speak to him in Afrikaans! It won't be a problem though as his English will pick up once he starts at preschool and school and he has more exposure. I'm also not worried about my DD's lagging Afrikaans. I figure if I have managed to learn to be conversational in the language when I only started at 20 then she can do at least as well if she started from birth. It's up to her how much she wants to pursue it. We have tried our best to expose her to it and give her the chance to learn it well if she wants to. It is true that children of immigrants often refuse to speak their home language after a while as it's 'uncool'. I think the best you can do is expose kids and give them the chance. The final choice as to what languages they want to speak as adults is theirs. I can only hope our children will grow up to see the opportunity it gives them.</p> <p>Other options I have heard of involve having days or sometimes weeks for specific languages. So you'd speak English on say Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays and Turkish the rest of the week, or whatever you decide. No idea how that works in practice as I don't know anyone who does it. Otherwise, you do get families who just talk whatever they want whenever. This works in cases where it is the cultural norm to have different languages for different groups of people within the community. For example I once knew someone whose daughter was learning 4 languages at the same time. The reason being that in her culture there were formal languages and</p>
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		<p>informal languages, some that you used with people like your boss and parents, another for friends a different one for your children... It's usually not a good idea to do this though with two distinct languages like English and Turkish unless your children are older and already totally fluent in one language.</p> <p>I think OP, that your main problem is actually going to be the homeschooling. Not that I'm against homeschooling, but normally I would advise to keep up the Turkish and simply expose your children to English by getting out into the community and watching TV and then let the schools take care of the rest once they go. Obviously though if you are going to homeschool, that's not going to work so well! It probably would have worked best for you if you'd done the one parent, one language thing from the start. You could do it now, but your toddler most likely won't like the change much! I suppose you could keep the Turkish for now, use English if you go out to say a playgroup or similar and then when you start homeschooling do all the lessons in English? Maybe you should try googling for info from America. I think you would find more people there who homeschool and have bilingual children.</p> <p>Other than that, can I suggest you try finding a playgroup? I help run one and nearly every child who attends is bilingual or English is a 2nd language. Most parents come in order to expose their children to English. Some come to practice their own English too! It's kind of funny really as we don't really talk about our languages much and there is such a wide range that few of us speak the same language as any of the others. Yet all these kids run around not having the faintest idea that they have this thing called 'bilingualism' in common!</p> <p>The only other important thing I should mention that I actually learnt during my university studies is that it is vitally important that your child learn at least one language totally fluently. It's probably not an issue for you, but it is important that if English is your 2nd language and you're not totally proficient at it that you DON'T attempt to teach your children English only. There have been cases where immigrants, wanting to give their</p>
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			kids the advantage of English for their schooling, opted not to speak their native tongue and only English, but their English was not good enough which resulted in the children having gaps in their language learning. Because this occurred when they were young it is apparently difficult and sometimes impossible to correct when they are older, especially since they had no other language to 'reference'. You can learn many languages later in life if you have learnt to speak one properly as you have a basis for understanding how a language works and it doesn't matter at all which language it is! If you don't learn one, complete language, you're stuffed! Got nothing to base an understanding of grammar etc on.
14	tadpole-bean	04 June 2011	That is so true Robhat. I caught my parents correcting my son's english once and had to laugh because my son was actually pronouncing it more correct. Since then I have banned my parents from teaching him english! Your post was a very interesting read. :-)
15	melanieb530	04 June 2011	I'd keep up with the Turkish only and let the children pick up English later as they will be surrounded by English very soon and probably already hear a lot of English anyway even if you don't speak English with them.
16	Eileithya	04 June 2011	I can't comment from personal experience but a friend of mine has children (under 5 yrs) who speak three languages. The mother speaks to them in Mongolian, the father in English and the parents speak to each other in German. (they live in Germany) The kids learnt just from different types of exposures.
17	robhat	05 June 2011	QUOTE (hooverdamsel @ 04/06/2011, 11:28 PM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}> As an ESL teacher my advice would be to talk to them in English and Turkish right from when they are young. The idea of different parents with different languages is a good one. I teach children ESL in a state school and some children from homes where other languages are spoken wait until they come to school to teach them English. It seriously impairs the child's ability to make friends and participate in the classroom and it can be so stressful for the child. Research shows that before the age of 7 is the

			<p>best time to teach people a language as they are better able to absorb language. After puberty it is quite difficult to learn a new language so the earlier the better.</p> <p>This is true. I've been in Kindergarten classes with children who had very little English and it is hard on them at first. Some parents however don't feel their English is strong enough to teach their children, so leave it until school years and some feel that they have a better chance of maintaining the home language if they leave English until later. It is obviously easier on the children to have English taught when they are younger where possible. I think a lot of families where both parents speak a language other than English don't do it because language is such a personal, identity thing and they feel more comfortable speaking their native tongue to their children. Often neither parent wants to be the English speaking one because it means giving up the chance to speak their mother tongue to their children until the children are old enough to be fluent in both. In your case OP. I'd be opting for the Turkish at home and English out in public type of model. That way you still have the chance to speak Turkish with your children, but they should get plenty of exposure to English providing you take them out to things like a playgroup or story time at the library and even when you're grocery shopping you can speak English the whole time. Also, explain to your children all the time that you speak Turkish at home and English at the shops etc. They may not immediately understand what you mean, but they will eventually! Obviously though if you are going to homeschool, you will have to work out then what you'll use English for and what you'll do in Turkish.</p>
18	Sunny003	05 June 2011	<p>I was raised in a bi-lingual home.</p> <p>Nonna spoke Italian (very little English. She lived with us) mum English (a little Italian) and dad spoke both.</p> <p>It's quite funny to listen to family and even some of my friends. A lot will mix English and Italian in the same sentence lol</p>

19	discodeniz	05 June 2011	<p>QUOTE (tadpole-bean @ 04/06/2011, 11:16 PM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>That is so true Robhat. I caught my parents correcting my son's english once and had to laugh because my son was actually pronouncing it more correct. Since than I have banned my parents from teaching him english! Your post was a very interesting read. :-)</p> <p>Very interesting read indeed. And enlightening. Thanks Rohbat</p>
20	discodeniz	05 June 2011	<p>QUOTE (robhat @ 05/06/2011, 01:44 PM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>This is true. I've been in Kindergarten classes with children who had very little English and it is hard on them at first. Some parents however don't feel their English is strong enough to teach their children, so leave it until school years and some feel that they have a better chance of maintaining the home language if they leave English until later. It is obviously easier on the children to have English taught when they are younger where possible. I think a lot of families where both parents speak a language other than English don't do it because language is such a personal, identity thing and they feel more comfortable speaking their native tongue to their children. Often neither parent wants to be the English speaking one because it means giving up the chance to speak their mother tongue to their children until the children are old enough to be fluent in both. In your case OP. I'd be opting for the Turkish at home and English out in public type of model. That way you still have the chance to speak Turkish with your children, but they should get plenty of exposure to English providing you take them out to things like a playgroup or story time at the library and even when you're grocery shopping you can speak English the whole time. Also, explain to your children all the time that you speak Turkish at home and English at the shops etc. They may not immediately understand what you mean, but they will eventually! Obviously though if you</p>

			<p>are going to homeschool, you will have to work out then what you'll use English for and what you'll do in Turkish.</p> <p>Wow really good post, I feel you actually get me! The part about the personal approach with Turkish, in fact my English is much better than my Turkish and it is always my choice of language to people outside the family (even Turkish friends), perhaps I will try the English outside thing and see how it goes. I need to make myself comfortable talking to them in English if I'm going to teach them I English! I so don't know mathematical terms in Turkish! Haha.</p>
21	ManiMum	05 June 2011	<p>I can not comment from my own family experience however close friends of mine have a 2.5 yo son and they are a bi-lingual family! The son is picking up well both languages - the only issue is that a lot of their friends and children are in the same situation where they know both so he thinks that I can understand him when I can't. This does make me laugh when his mum has to interpret what he is saying to me when the next sentence will be in English! Either way I would want to make sure they knew English before school as it will assist with their learning in that regard. Then keep the second language at home and around others that speak it too.</p>

Thread 11. OP11, 29 November 2011, Your bi-lingual baby Hints, Tips, Advice and Experience please

OP1 1	LenaK	29 Nov 2011	<p>DS is 6 months and will be raised bil-lingual (English/Dutch). We currently speak English at home and Dutch outside the home, though DH speaks to him in both Dutch and English.</p> <p>I have done (very) little research on the net about bi-lingual kids but I really would like a little more info.</p> <p>Firstly: Can anyone recomend a good book on raising bi-lingual kids?</p> <p>What are your experiences? Do you have any tips?</p> <p>At the moment I find myself saying some words in both Dutch and English becuase its important that he knows</p>
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			<p>them - like hot! Is this correct or should I be doing something else?</p> <p>I'm not sure how to manage things like learning manners - please and thankyou. I know he will learn all the appropriate words in time. I've been saying 'Ta', but when I had a think about it the other day I thought what a silly thing to teach - its not even a real word. On the other hand - he at least learns that its appropriate to say something before he masters please/grraag/alstubleift/thank you/bedankt and dank u?</p> <p>He is also not yet making alot of sounds. I have heard single, random sounds e.g. ah, ga, ba. But he doesnt babble at all. I'm not concerned at this stage but I am curious: do bi-lingual kids speak later?</p> <p>I'd love to hear your experience and any tips or advice you might have.</p> <p>Thanks in advance</p>
1	CLT	29 Nov 2011	<p>My DD is 14 months and I try to only speak Mandarin to her and DH and everyone else speak English. She understands both languages quite well and what we did was DH would say something in English and I'll repeat in Mandarin. I'll also say it again in English. I was told by MCHN and educators that babies/toddlers do not know the difference between two languages as long as you are consistent with who speaks what until they are about two. Eventually the child will respond in the language you use most frequently. Like if I say cuddles in mandarin she reaches out and my DH will say it in English and she responds too.</p>
2	maeby	29 Nov 2011	<p>I went to a talk on raising multilingual children a while before my first baby was born (the talk was by a woman called Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa, who apparently has written some books on the subject. I haven't read any of them, but her talk was very informative).</p> <p>My now-20ish-month old baby is bilingual english and Swiss german, and I'm shocked every day by how well she understands the two languages and differentiates</p>

			<p>between them. The key thing, according to Tokuhamas-Espinosa, is to make sure that the boundary between the languages is clear, either (she says) by distancing the languages by time, person or location. To that effect, in our family I speak only english with our daughter, my husband speaks only german (we might both speak the other language in other circumstances, and the main language where we live is french, but we are pretty strict about each only speaking our own language with her). Other ways to divide it up might be that you only speak one language at home, and the other outside, or you speak one language in the morning, the other in the afternoon/evening.</p> <p>I don't know when most babies start speaking, but ours started in earnest (ie. real words that people would recognise as such, not just all this ma ma ma ma stuff) when she was about 18 months. Since then (ie. in about 6 weeks) she has progressed amazingly, puts a few words together, understands heeeeeeaps of stuff, and knows clearly what is my word and what is her dad's word for something (eg. we were all hanging out some laundry the other day. DD picked a bib out of the basket and passed it to me saying "bib", but then changed her mind, took the bib to her dad and handed it to him saying "latzli".</p> <p>I don't know what the answer is with manners. My husband and I are trying to make more of an effort to be polite to each other and say please and thankyou a lot, but all the many options and the fact that they don't really overlap properly (ie. please and bitte are sometimes the same thing, but not in other contexts) makes it fairly confusing. I assume she'll get there in the end. We're not teaching her to say "ta" in the meanwhile, though.</p>
3	greengoddesses	29 Nov 2011	<p>A friend of mine is raising her children tri-lingually. She is German, her husband is Palestinian and they speak English in common. She said being consistent with who speaks what was the key - so she only speaks German to the children, her husband only speaks Arabic to the children and they speak English together. Their five year</p>

			old son is perfectly fluent in all three - it's impressive to watch! The youngest is still babbling!
4	Frenchgirl	29 Nov 2011	<p>The main rule I have come across is consistency. Don't blur the borders of which language belongs to the right person. We are raising our children bi-lingual (French and English) and we both speak our mother tongue to our DS. DH and I both speak those two languages and communicate in whichever one we like at the time. However we would always respond to DS in our own language.</p> <p>Also I have found with most bilingual children that they can be a good 6 months behind non blingual children. Infact it seems to be perfectly normal.</p>
5	Lokum	29 Nov 2011	<p>Read 'Raising a Bilingual Child,' by Barbara Zurer Pearson.</p> <p>She also talks about the different models families use (One-parent-one language; vs one-at-home-one-outside=home and other options.) She doesn't say that one model is better than another, but she helps you look at your circumstances, consider the strengths or weaknesses of your language environment and then pick strategies.</p> <p>Mostly she talks about the majority language vs minority language. We live in Australia, and my DH's first language is XYZ. Because English is the language of 90% of DS relies here, of TV, radio, the community, school and is my first language - it's obviously the majority language. Plus, globally there's a big emph</p> <p>asis on English as the lingua franca (so to speak!) and the language of international commerce, trade, travel etc. You think this is not important to a baby, but they're getting messages from their environment constantly about the importance of a language.</p> <p>The trick is how to promote the minority language. One parent speaking only the minority language helps, but it depends how much time that parent spends with the child, and how much one-on-one time. Plus, consider motive and opportunity for the child. How many chances (in hours per week) do they get to be immersed in the</p>

		<p>minority language?</p> <p>Pearson suggests a MINIMUM of 20 hours per week (awake!) in the minority language to achieve more than passive bilingualism (understands but doesn't speak.)</p> <p>In terms of motive, why would the child want to/bother the speak the minority language? Is it because all the people around her are positive about that language? Is it because she has cool DVDs in that language? Because she gets constant positive reinforcement from her parents when she tries? Because her grandparents praise her and it clearly makes them happy when she speaks it?</p> <p>Is she teased when she makes mistakes in the minority language? Does she get the same response whichever language she speaks (in which case why bother with the minority?)</p> <p>This really opened my eyes. My DS has had a language explosion in the last 8 weeks, but ALL his words are English. My DH speaks 90% XYZ with DS. We are both WAHM parents, so spend roughly equal time with DS. He understands basic commands in XYZ (come here, No!, give it to me etc). When you ask him in XYX what does a dog say, cat say, duck say, cow say, he responds with woof, miao, quack etc. But he has not said a word in XYZ.</p> <p>There's already a gap between the 2 languages. Having DH speak XYZ is not enough motive OR opportunity. Consequently, we're committed to spending large chunks of time in XYZ country - ie effectively making XYZ the majority language for a while, and making English the minority language to even things up. We've got 6 months planned in 2012. We have to work while we're there anyway, so he'll also have a XYZ-speaking nanny (part-time) in that time - ideally one who doesn't speak English.</p> <p>Oh, and apparently there's no strong consistent evidence that bi-lingual children take longer. The same spread of normal applies to bi-linguals, tri-linguals and mono-linguals. However, in the beginning it might look like a</p>
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			<p>delay because the child's total vocab is spread over 2 languages. So when they have 50 words, it might only be 25 in each language, whereas the kid next door has 50 in one only and appears to be ahead.</p> <p>See also http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/two...poken_here.html</p> <p>Good luck!</p>
6	LenaK	01 December 2011	<p>Some great tips.</p> <p>It looks like we will have to be more careful about who speaks which language. Those borders are pretty blurry at the moment.</p> <p>In the meantime, I'll look into both those books.</p> <p>Thanks for your replies</p>
7	PumpkinSpice	01 December 2011	<p>I would like to add my support to the comments to support the minority language!!!</p> <p>We moved to Sydney when I was 6 (from Finland) and we always spoke Finnish at home. Both me and my sister learnt English fine at school and it was constantly reinforced through media and contact with friends.</p> <p>Finnish definitely became our "weaker" language, so it was really important to support it as much as possible with books, play, etc.</p> <p>My partner is German and we plan to raise our kids bi/tri-lingual - I speak finnish, he speaks german, together we speak german and some english, and the kids would attend an international (english) school!!</p>
8	kpingitquiet	01 December 2011	<p>I would strongly consider finding a playgroup with another few Dutch-speaking parents, or later finding a preschool/class with Dutch offered, then maybe a Dutch cultural activity once school starts. It fades SO quickly. I grew up in a very bi-lingual area (Spanish/English) and so many of the kids I knew had forgotten their Spanish by the time they reached teen years.</p> <p>We have an...odd.. lingual issue in our house. We are both native English speakers but in two different forms</p>

			<p>of English. I think some people discount this as fluff but a word as basic as "Car" or "Mama" is pronounced differently. Like, I say "CAR" and husband says "CAH" or "mama/mommy" vs "mumma/mummy". Our newly-12mo understands a LOT of what we say and follow instructions, etc, but struggles to say much back, yet. "Dada," "Mama," and, of all things, "Balloon". And that's all within the last couple weeks. I often wonder if her brain is operating much the same as a child's who was born into a fully bilingual family.</p>
9	justeeny23	01 Decemb er 2011	<p>If you live in the Melbourne area there is a free bilingual talk at Melbourne university on the 11th of December (you need to register by the 6th). I went last year and found it to be very helpful.</p> <p>I am also bringing up my children bilingually in Dutch and English (my husband is Dutch and I speak a little). I belong to a Dutch playgroup...let me know if you are interested (otherwise a quick internet search might assist you with finding one in your area).</p>
10	Lokum	02 Decemb er 2011	<p>QUOTE (justeeny23 @ 01/12/2011, 07:17 AM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>If you live in the Melbourne area there is a free bilingual talk at Melbourne university on the 11th of December (you need to register by the 6th). I went last year and found it to be very helpful.</p> <p>Thanks Justeeny23. I'm going to go to that now. I missed out last year and hadn't heard it was on again.</p>
11	LenaK	02 Decemb er 2011	<p>Thanks everyone. We are actually now living in Holland so English is his minority language but I am his primary carer (so I think that helps?). Everyone here speaks English very well and it is compulsory in schools. I have thought about trying to find an English playgroup (easy in the cities I think, but we are country so I am not so sure)</p> <p>We were living in Melbourne and would have <i>loved</i> to come to a Dutch playgroup - if we ever make it back to</p>

			<p>Oz I will definitely look it up!</p> <p>Edited: becuae my English clearly needs some work</p>
12	canuckmel	03 Decem ber 2011	<p>As others have said, the key is is consistency. DH speaks exclusively to the children in Croatian and only in English when it is a conversation in which I am also involved.</p> <p>The kids are fluent in both Croatian and English.</p> <p>As others have said, the key is is consistency. DH speaks exclusively to the children in Croatian and only in English when it is a conversation in which I am also involved.</p> <p>The kids are fluent in both Croatian and English.</p>
13	pattercake7	13 Jan 2012	<p>To re-iterate the words already spoken by many above: consistency is key! That is all! I don't have bi-lingual children, but my brothers do and my cousins were brought up that way as well as many people around me in life!</p> <p>I can't say for sure as I am not an expert, but, I wouldn't really suggest saying words in one language and then repeating them in another, because this will cause for confusion! You may well find the child integrates the two languages which was deinitely not intended! I know people who speak 7 languages - I speak only english and a little of german!</p> <p>But, it is all about consistency, to use the example above : Mother speaks french to child, fater speaks german, and together they speak english! This is how it should be done, and the child will also learn to read a situation and put situations and skills in to the correct context - Skills for life!</p> <p>Good luck!</p>
14	saxa	15 Jan 2012	<p>Friends of ours recently had a baby she is Australian he is French.</p> <p>They were told by family and friends from day one he</p>

			<p>speak to the baby in French only and she speak in English only.</p> <p>Baby is only 4 months old at the moment but they have done this since they day he was born.</p>
15	Jimellie	24 February 2012	<p>I just came across your post, and as an Australian also living in the Netherlands, about to have my first baby, the topic of raising bi-lingual children seemed very interesting to me!</p> <p>I am also hoping to join an English speaking playgroup and have found a few English/Dutch speaking playgroups in the Leiden area. I'm not sure where you are located in the Netherlands, but this might be helpful if you live in de buurt van Leiden</p> <p>Feel free to send a PM anytime!</p>
16	Sal78	27 February 2012	<p>I only speak chinese to my twins. everyone else speaks eng and tv. They are fine. Development was a lil slowish but they are almost 3 now and very talkative, can speak and understand 2 languages and development has all caught up.</p> <p>I know they will learn eng sooner or later but if I miss the chance to teach them chinese when they are young and can easily pick it up then it's very hard to re-teach later. also, have to make them confident in speaking chinese too.</p> <p>I made the mistake with my ds1 and I spoke to him in eng and chinese, more so eng without even realizing it and now at 6y.o, he doesn't really know chinese. Even if he can understand, he refuses to speak chinese. My twins knows more than him easily.</p>

Thread 12. OP12, 02 March 2012, Raising bi-lingual children do you do it? How and why?

OP12	b723	02 March 2012	<p>So, a bit of background: I'm 21 weeks pregnant with our first. I'm Australian born and only speak English. I never even learnt a language at school, but I've always thought being bi-lingual would be a great skill to have. My DH is from another country. He is</p>
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			<p>bi-lingual. English is his first language, but he is fluent in a second language (this language is spoken by his parents, and he did all his schooling primary-uni in the second language).</p> <p>DH doesn't feel that he wants to teach our child/ren his second language. It is only spoken within his home country which is far away from here. Our child/ren would have limited opportunity to speak it with anyone but him (I've learnt a few words, but certainly can't hold a conversation in it). All of his family speak both languages, so even if we go to visit them there won't be much of an opportunity to speak it - all conversation will be in English.</p> <p>So I'm curious about others: are you or you or your partner bi-lingual? Are you teaching your children to speak both languages? If not - how did you come to that decision? If so, how do you do it?</p> <p>It's really looking like we'll end up with English only in our household, but I just want to make sure that is the right decision for us and for them.</p>
1	Guest_pessi_*	02 March 2012	<p>Slightly different scenario for us, my first language is also not English but I'm bilingual in a way that's more meaningful to me. We chose to raise our kids bilingual partly because of that and partly because there's a small chance we'll move back to my home country at some point.</p> <p>I think I can see where your DH is coming from, it's hard work to try and stick to a language you don't otherwise speak (I'm finding that a little bit the case even in our situation, I would imagine it'd be even more so in his case, when it has no day-to-day relevance to him).</p>

			<p>But as far as his family goes, if you did go down the bilingual route, it probably wouldn't be too difficult to get them to support it. Even if they speak English well, chances are they would love to speak their own language to their grandchild, and would be pleased to be involved say by sending regular parcels of DVDs, CDs or books in that language.</p>
2	babychacha	02 March 2012	<p>Agree with PP re the family part.</p> <p>Another side for you:</p> <p>My XH was never taught his "home" country's language (he came to Australia as a baby) and always regrets it. Both his parents and GM spoke the language so he could have learnt. So whenever he visits his "home" country, everyone is amazed he doesn't speak the language and he is embarrassed.</p> <p>Its such an easy thing for kids to pick up and much harder when they are adults.</p> <p>I do get your DH's point of view though.</p>
3	BVB09	02 March 2012	<p>I would love my children to speak German, but DH is the only bi-lingual speaker.</p>
4	Lyn29	02 March 2012	<p>I would have loved to be able to give my children the gift of a second language - but I am monolingual myself.</p> <p>There's research that shows many benefits to raising children with a second language; something about synapses developing faster and making it much easier to learn a third or subsequent language. I don't think it would matter that the language isn't a common one.</p>

5	Feral-Lausii	02 March 2012	<p>My children speak English and Tongan. I'm Australian born, ex DH Tongan, English second language for him but his English is excellent. Children pick up a second language so easily, we use a mixture of both at home. Kids recently went to Tonga in Jan, most people were shocked to hear them speak it, but then so happy they were able to converse with them. Especially older family members whose English is limited.</p> <p>You will probably find you also learn the language too. I did.</p>
6	Tomate1910	02 March 2012	<p>s a bilingual linguists I would say give it a go...</p> <p>The overall benefits are a little debatable and have been exaggerated in the past (i.e your child will NOT be smarter than other children) but might have a better appreciation of the way language works especially if the languages are very different from each other and this might translate to easier language learning. they are also said to have better attention span, in the sense that they can more easily focus on important information and dismiss less crucial information in order to solve a task...</p> <p>My hubby and I are both bilingual and share our first language and want to raise our child bilingually as well. You need to make sure to consult good literature But the most important rule is to eitehr separate languages by environment (home vs outside) or by person (you English - your husband his language) and to be consistent.</p> <p>The most tricky phase comes once children enter school because while they might still understand the other language they will quickly take to replying in English. Another drwaback if you separate home/outside could</p>

			<p>be that your childrens vocabulary is only limited to home vocab and it might be hard for them to go and study in that country or do something more demanding than that...</p> <p>Heritage language schools can also help later on especially when it comes to writing!</p> <p>God luck and as PP said I'm sure you will pick it up something...</p>
7	Sweet like a lemon	02 March 2012	<p>DD speaks Afrikaans. I don't care how obscure a language is, knowing a second language helps towards understanding that there are technical differences in languages, as well as why so much gets lost or misinterpreted in translation. Also helps to understand how difficult pronunciation and 2nd language phonemes can be, which in turn helps to towards the prevention of becoming one of those annoying people who stand around going "I don't understand your accent" while feeling offended because 2 people in the office had a conversation in their home language.</p>
8	LifeGoesOn	02 March 2012	<p>My family is bilingual, we originate from another country, however both my children will be speaking English only. I don't see the point in teaching them a language they will never use here in Australia. We are not returning to our country, so there is no need for it.</p> <p>As for understanding accents, knowing another language doesn't automatically mean you will interpret an accent. I can speak two languages fluently and even dabbled in a third and I still cannot decipher them, it is only when they start speaking in that language that the penny drops for me.</p>

9	paddyboo	02 March 2012	<p>I would love for Pat to speak a second language, not only is it a skill that sometimes gives an edge in future careers, but it is also DEAD SEXY! So I would really be doing his future partner a favour! LOL! I wish DH spoke another language</p> <p>Alas, DH and I only speak English, well I can speak basic french but I was never fluent and it has been 10 years since I spoke it so I can only remember the basics. I will probably look into it down the track, if you were going to give them lessons (rather than them learning from yourself) when do you normally start?</p>
10	BVB09	02 March 2012	<p>QUOTE (LifeGoesOn @ 02/03/2012, 08:24 AM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>I don't see the point in teaching them a language they will never use here in Australia. We are not returning to our country, so there is no need for it.</p> <p>Do you not think that when they are older they may want to visit your native country ?</p> <p>I know that when we visit Germany every couple of years, I am so thankful that my DH can speak the language thanks to his parents !</p>
11	maeby	02 March 2012	<p>We`re raising our kids bilingual, and their dad`s language is one that is not useful outside a certain part of the country he grew up in. It`s reasonably likely we will live in his country again (as we did when #1 was born, although not in an area where that language was spoken), and it`s also the only language that most of his relatives (parents, siblings, grandparents) are fluent in. Even if we don`t live there again, though, it`s also something my husband feels strongly about</p>

			<p>(as do I), as well as giving the advantages of understanding more about languages, cultural differences etc. It's also a pretty good motivating factor for me to learn the language as well (sigh).</p> <p>We use the one-parent-one-language method, which seems to me to be one of the most commonly used ways of teaching a second mother tongue. He speaks his language with our kids, I speak mine. We also use english as a common language when husband and I speak to each other, and we're fortunate that I understand most of what he says in his own language (avoids a lot of repetition).</p>
12	hopefulus	02 March 2012	<p>I was raised bi-lingual as my mother is French. Mum tells me that from the start, she was talking to me in both languages.</p> <p>When I was a toddler, she would point to an object at home or while out and say the name for it in both languages. She would talk to me in French exclusively when my Dad went to work so my Dad wouldn't feel excluded but speak to me in English when Dad was home.</p> <p>DH and I love to travel and it has been an enormous advantage.</p> <p>I find even through my job, as I come into contact with all different nationalities, it is immensely useful as many nationalities are taught French at school and I have found that if some have difficulties with English, you can communicate in French.</p>
13	Mpjp is feral	02 March 2012	<p>I agree with Superfruity.</p> <p>I also have several friends where one parent is bilingual and they are raising their children to be bilingual. The monolingual parent speaks english and the bilingual parent only</p>

			<p>speaks the language other than english. I also have friends who only spoke the second language with their child and the child entered kinder at 3 with no english (but went to our local kinder where 80-90% of the kids would be bilingual or have little english and the 4 kinder teachers/ assistants between them have all languages covered.</p> <p>We are a little different. Dh and I are both monolingual. 2 of our kids were adopted from overseas. Our children go to a bilingual school that teaches in the language of their birth country. for 2 and half days a week they do not speak any english/ hear english/ use english, but instead the other language. For example they learn maths in the other language, but art in english.</p> <p>This has been interesting, especially in terms of homework time!!! I can not help at all (instructions for homework aren't even in english)!!!</p> <p>As an aside one of my kids has a speech and language disorder. But only in english! In the other language she is graded as being far in advance of her peers (like 2-3 years ahead), her pronunciation is that of a local speaker, and her reading amazing!</p>
14	Lokum	02 March 2012	<p>There are many benefits to speaking another language well. It may aid in literacy, make one more mentally agile or flexible, and give one a strong appreciation that there are different ways of doing/thinking/speaking/describing.</p> <p>Language is very cultural. The fact that there may be 4 words for 'aunt' in another language but only one in English tells us things about that other culture. This means the bilingual child is likely to be more accepting and appreciative of cultural (and</p>

		<p>other) differences wherever she encounters them. She already knows there's more than one way of seeing things, and both are valid.</p> <p>Plus you never know when a language might be beneficial. You don't have to go and live in that country for it to help. There are advantages to studying a language for university entrance, there may be jobs where it's helpful and employers often regard bilingualism as an asset even if it's not actually required for the job.</p> <p>HOWEVER, my (anecdotal plus proper) research indicates that when the father is the minority language speaker, it's a lot harder than when the mother is the minority language speaker.</p> <p>MY favourite book on this topic is Raising a Bilingual child in which Barbara Zurer Pearson emphasises that in getting a child to become proficient in the minority language, the two main factors are motive and opportunity. (You don't have to worry about the majority language, English, as it will basically take care of itself.)</p> <p>Motive and Opportunity mean - Opportunity - how many hours per week does the child get to hear XYZ language, and in how many different contexts and with how many different people do they get to hear/speak/practice? If it's only the Dad who works out of home and spends 10 hours with the child during the week, and 20 waking hours with the child on the weekend, and he doesn't ALWAYS speak the minority language with the child, it's basically not enough. They might get to understand the language, and speak a few words but that's all.</p> <p>Motive - why would the child bother with the</p>
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		<p>minority language? Is it because their father won't talk back to them, or (pretends) he doesn't understand English? Is it because he's fun and plays great games when he speaks XYZ and they want to join in? Is it because they have a very special and warm relationship with their grandmother, who only speaks XYZ? Is it because they go to a wonderful playgroup where only XYZ is spoken?</p> <p>If you don't have many pluses across motive and opportunity, it's going to be very difficult.</p> <p>Another VERY significant predictor of success is the parents' attitude. Do they want the child to speak the minority language, and do they believe that their behaviour will actually influence/determine whether the child does end up speaking the language?</p> <p>If they don't really care one way or the other, the child will only speak the majority language. If they really want it, but believe it's sort of impossible, or that monolingualism is inevitable, then it will be.</p> <p>In the OP's case, her DH is indifferent, and doesn't really want to bother with the minority language, so it's sort of a done deal already.</p> <p>In our case, my DH really wants DS to speak the min lang, and so do I. We have very few other people around who speak it. DH does work from home, and speaks to DS in that language about 80% of the time. He reads him a book in that language every day, but we all prefer our English books because they're nicer quality and we have a bigger selection.</p> <p>I believe we can do it, but DH is full of</p>
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			<p>doubts, saying it won't work unless we're in that country. DS now says around 50-100 words and is starting to combine them. Only 2 of those words are in the minority language. The rest are English. He understands many words and some basic commands (sit down, stand up, go and get the book) in minority language, but it's already far, far behind his English and he's only 20 months old.</p> <p>This is HARD. It is easier for children to acquire 2 languages than for a monolingual adult to acquire a second language. However, that doesn't mean it's EASY or it will just happen. It requires a strong commitment and discipline. I'm monolingual with very basic proficiency in 2 other languages and I'm OK. It's not the end of the world to be monolingual if your only language is English. But bilingualism is such a wonderful and enormous gift to give a child, that I think it's worth giving it your best shot if you have the chance.</p>
15	Feralina	02 March 2012	<p>I'm of the view that no harm can come from teaching children a second language, and any extra language skills they have are an advantage, so why not try it? It's not an 'all or nothing' situation - they don't have to be able to speak it perfectly - so whatever they pick up from your husband will be beneficial to them.</p> <p>I would call myself trilingual, and my DH is monolingual (English). My parents spoke to me almost entirely in their language as a small child, and as a result I've been able to go and travel to their country and communicate easily with all my relatives over there. It has also made it (I believe) much easier to learn another language at high school (most of which I've forgotten!), and yet another at university. As a linguist, these</p>

			<p>skills have been invaluable. I have always been grateful to them for teaching me their language! I have many friends who regret that their parents decided not to teach them their language (often happens when one parent is bilingual and the other isn't), so that is something to think about. I also have a couple of friends who were taught another language by their one bilingual parent, or even a grandparent, and while they cannot speak it very well, they can understand it well and when they visit the country they are able to communicate just fine. This is what I am hoping to do with my DS (my parents speak their language to him exclusively, and I do some of the time) - it's a lifeskill that I think is really valuable.</p>
16	Tomate1910	02 March 2012	<p>QUOTE (Lokum @ 02/03/2012, 09:57 AM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>I believe we can do it, but DH is full of doubts, saying it won't work unless we're in that country. DS now says around 50-100 words and is starting to combine them. Only 2 of those words are in the minority language. The rest are English. He understands many words and some basic commands (sit down, stand up, go and get the book) in minority language, but it's already far, far behind his English and he's only 20 months old.</p> <p>MY old undergrad Linguistics professor was born in Turkey and met his German wife when they were both doing there PhD in the US. They son grew up with three languages, Turkish from Dad, German from mom and general environment and English from when mom and dad interacted. He did not start talking until he was almost 2.5 years old, but boy then he could talk!</p>

			Don't give up hope Lokum... the vocab spurt in both languages might just be around the corner! maybe DH could also have L2 music/songs etc? so the child gets input even if DH doesn't speak to him?
17	Guest_holy_j_*	02 March 2012	<p>It's actually quite hard when there is one parent not fluent in the language/s and the other is. My dad never taught us German, mum wanted him too, but he had no one else to speak German with, easier said than done.</p> <p>DP is multi-lingual, (Arabic, French, then English + conversational in half a dozen others) I speak English. Their Moroccan cousins, even the 3 year old was already speaking in Moroccan, French and was currently at kindy and could already speak some English...but her parents both speak all 3 languages and the set up is different over there, they do languages right from kindy, not formally (same as anything, starts off with the greetings, numbers etc.) but as most people over there speak at least 2 languages , they get exposed to them a lot more. It's a bit silly that we wait so long to start languages over here, the kid's school doesn't start LOTE until year 4 or 5!</p> <p>The thing is I'm the parent at home with them most of the time, and they got their skills from me first and foremost- perhaps it would be easier if the primary caregiver was the non-English speaker. The kids can all understand about 100 words in Moroccan, and speak about 40-50 but nowhere near fluent and nothing like their cousins.</p>
18	Lokum	02 March 2012	<p>QUOTE (holy_j @ 02/03/2012, 10:21 AM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>It's actually quite hard when there is one parent not fluent in the language/s and the other is. My dad never taught us German, mum wanted him too, but he had no one else</p>

			<p>to speak german with, easier said than done.</p> <p>....</p> <p>The thing is i'm the parent at home with them most of the time, and they got their skills from me first and foremost- perhaps it would be easier if the primary caregiver was the non-english speaker. The kids can all understand about 100 wordsin moroccan, and speak about 40-50 but nowhere near fluent and nothing like their cousins.</p> <p>Yes! This is sort of what I was saying too. It's harder if the Dad (usually the non-primary carer) is the minority language speaker. Our solution for this is to go to XYZ country, which basically will turn Dad into the majority language speaker, and me into the minority language speaker.</p> <p>I'm going to be working a lot while we're there, so we'll also have an XYZ-speaking nanny. If he doesn't come back to Australia at the end of this year with much more XYZ, I'll be devastated.</p>
19	Lokum	02 March 2012	<p>QUOTE (superfruity @ 02/03/2012, 10:14 AM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>Don't give up hope Lokum... the vocab spurt in both languages might just be around the corner! maybe DH could also have L2 music/songs etc? so the child gets input even if DH doesnt speak to him?</p> <p>Thanks for this. Yeah, we have a couple of annoying toys which speak XYZ, and he has a doll which only understands XYZ (as far as we tell him!) and a couple of DVDs in XYZ which he watches about once a week. We should definitely get some music for the car</p>

			<p>while we're there, but the quality of stuff for children is diabolically bad.</p> <p>I hope there's a spurt while we're there... but at the moment he mimics everything I say, and just stares at DH. Wants to know the name of things, but only responds and repeats the name when we're speaking English.</p> <p>DH makes it worse by speaking XYZ but sometimes inserting an English word where he thinks DS won't know the XYZ word but does know the English one.</p> <p>It is SOOO exciting when he says an XYZ word. One morning DH was playing with him and asked him (in XYZ) what does the dog say? What does the cat say? The duck? DS replied with woof woof, miao, quack quack.</p> <p>Even though it wasn't strictly speaking XYZ, it was obviously understanding it, and we were so excited we both cried!!</p>
20	EllenD	02 March 2012	<p>Lots of your post resonates with me. My DH is an English speaker only. For me:</p> <p>QUOTE</p> <p>My DH is I am from another country. He is I am bi-lingual. English is his my first language, but he is I'm fluent in a second language (this language is spoken by his my parents, and he I did all his schooling primary-secondary-uni in the second language).</p> <p>Prior to having our DS I thought much the same as your husband, particularly since</p>

		<p>English is the default language of conversation in my parents home.</p> <p>QUOTE</p> <p>DH doesn't feel that he wants to teach our child/ren his second language. It is only spoken within his home country which is far away from here. Our child/ren would have limited opportunity to speak it with anyone but him (I've learnt a few words, but certainly can't hold a conversation in it). All of his family speak both languages, so even if we go to visit them there won't be much of an opportunity to speak it - all conversation will be in English.</p> <p>So what has happened since DS was born (he's now at the stage of starting to babble himself)? Turns out I knew more nursery rhymes and songs and baby games in the other language. So these are what I've predominately being using. DH has learned many of these too. I expect as my son gets older (particularly starting kinder/ school) the use of the other language will wane. It's too much of a minority/ near dead language for me to speak it with him at home full time, but I hope he will pick up enough so that when visiting my home country he can read signs/ get references to the other language within the predominately English conversation etc.</p> <p>If we did return to my home country age some stage, DS would need to use the language in a school setting and I think he would manage this easily if under 10 with the starting vocabulary he'll have from his toddlerhood.</p>
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21	noi'mnot	02 March 2012	<p>We have already seen some success with our 18-month-old. I speak to her in English, my husband in the other language (which I speak some of and understand quite well). The key for us has really been to be strict with the other language. Every night before bed, DH reads her at least 2 storybooks in the other language. She LOVES reading books, and this really helps with her vocabulary. She now asks for the books in the other language.</p> <p>She also skypes with her grandparents at least once a week. They initially tried to speak to her in English (their English is ok but their grammar is appalling) but we have been persistent in getting them to speak to her in the other language. This really helps.</p> <p>She now understands basic instructions in both English and the other language, like "please put this book back on the shelf and get another one". When she is talking to either one of us (her parents), she changes languages and says "no" to me in English but the equivalent in the other language. Asks for water in English or the other language depending on whom she is speaking to, etc. Her spoken vocabulary in English (about 50 words) is bigger than the other language (about 20 words) but her comprehension is great and as she learns more words in the other language she gets heaps of praise for using them correctly or trying.</p> <p>As PPs have been saying, it's a lot of hard work. Really hard work. Children's CDs in this other language are pretty bad, some books are a bit odd (in one, a dog was asking everybody why his nose squeaks - turns out on the last page he had influenza!) but we really persist. Nursery rhymes, songs, even pop songs help. Lucky she loves dancing to music, so we play a lot of music in the other</p>
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			<p>language and her father sings to it.</p> <p>If both you and your partner are dedicated to your child learning the other language it is certainly possible.</p>
22	Le-a	02 March 2012	<p>Both my DH and I are bilingual, but our mother languages are different. So we speak English to each other (but curiously if we have had enough wine, and yell at each other we can understand our respective languages!!), but we each speak our other language to our families.</p> <p>DS will be raised bilingually, he spends a lot of time with my parents and they speak Swiss German to him exclusively. I'm not sure how much he will pick up, but he already understands a few questions in both languages, eg. where is the cat?</p> <p>Both my DH and I agree, in our experience knowing two languages is a bonus. We both find it easy to pick up other languages, and working in an industry where we have contact with ppl from all over the world its definatly handy being able to speak to people in a language other than English on occasion.</p> <p>I am of the oppinion that knowing more can never hurt!</p>
23	Born Three	02 March 2012	<p>We are raising our children bilingual however the second language is mainly spoken to them by my family as opposed to daily in the home environment.</p> <p>One thing we've done to aid it is purchase books online in the other language. We have word picture books and story books like the Very Hungry Caterpillar. We were able to find these online. We also have their favourite DVDs in the other language.</p>

			<p>Basically when they are with my family that is all they have to read and watch.</p> <p>We always thoughts they'd complain about it but they've been really good! They have great comprehension and say a few words - not sentences. They are 3.5 and 2 years.</p>
24	bluedragon	02 March 2012	<p>DH is kind of bilingual. Similar situation to yours, English is his first language but he went to kindy and primary school in the second language. Unfortunately when he emigrated at age 7 he was the only member of his family who could speak the second language fluently, (his younger brother had only done one term at school and his grandparents generation had not taught his parents generation) so he lost a lot of it.</p> <p>We are both learning the second language and hope to teach DS some of it. I don't know if we can get him fluent as neither of us are at the moment but we have lots of books and will be getting lots of DVDs soon.</p> <p>The language is virtually useless outside his home country but I don't see that as a reason not to teach DS something that is part of his heritage.</p> <p>It is also very useful as a 'secret' family language. We used it between us a little when in Hong Kong and felt we were in a slightly dodgy situation.</p> <p>The first year DH moved to Australia he was in a very multicultural school, in his class of around 30 kids there were about 10 languages spoken and only 3 kids were born in Australia. He picked up so much of the other languages, he had basic conversation in about 4 of them (example being he had/understood enough Greek to converse with his mates grandma who had no English</p>

			skills at all). He puts this down to being bilingual at an early age. He still picks up languages very easily.
25	gravychic	3 March 2012	<p>I can speak English, Mandarin and Cantonese and hubby speaks English and Norwegian. We are hoping to teach our baby English, Mandarin and Norwegian from birth. We want to do this because it is sooooo easy for young minds to pick up languages (I knew a guy at uni who could speak FIVE languages fluently cos he was brought up with it) and it could open up so many different opportunities for them in the future. Even if they are not 100% fluent in the language, just knowing basics means they will be able to pick it up at a later age much easier, and also it gives them some connection to their heritage.</p> <p>We figure English will be easy as she will grow up in Australia, the Mandarin should be relatively easy because of my parents (they will be speaking to her exclusively in mandarin and we both encourage this, they also live 5mins away and want to spend lots of time with their first grandchild), the Norwegian will be a bit harder as hubby's family is all in Norway so he is the only one that can speak to her and teach her. He is planning on reading to her daily in Norwegian and also speaking to her mainly in Norwegian. Hopefully when she is a bit older we can send her over the Norway every few years to get to know/bond with that side of the family and also pick up the language and heritage.</p> <p>I think language is an invaluable gift, a life skill that can't ever be taken from you! So if you have the ability then why not pass it onto your child? I find it a bit strange when people</p>

			can't speak their 'native' tongue even tho their parents can and do, but just never bothered to pass it onto their children (i have a few cousins in American that can only speak English, its a bit sad because they can't communicate with some older members of the family) it just seems a bit of a waste!
26	catmeow82	03 March 2012	<p>I have only ever spoken english... attempts at language learning have been a horrible experience and i never got far!!</p> <p>DH is from a french speaking country. We decided that our kids would learn french and english from birth. So far they are going great. neither of them really speak it but understand and comprehend the french perfectly.</p>
27	b723	06 March 2012	<p>Thanks for all the replies and stories! It has been great to chat with DH about these as we've been talking lots about this over the weekend.</p> <p>DH is still set on not teaching our kids his second language, but having discussed the issue with him further (and with all of your help), I am now feeling completely fine about it. There are lots of good reasons to teach kids both languages, and in our case lots of good reasons not to as well. So we're happy with our decision - it'll be English all round at our place</p> <p>Thanks again!</p>
28	destinedtobemumto4	06 March 2012	My DH is Samoan and it's a huge part of the Samoan culture to be fluent in the language, I speak to baby in some Samoan (what I know) and he speaks to her in almost only Samoan. His friends speak to her in Samoan too. She understands and says a little. We keep meaning to make more of an effort with her but at the moment it's just when we can.

29	Guest_CaptainOblivious_*	06 March 2012	<p>I know you've already decided but thought I'd throw my 2cents worth in anyway. I'm not bilingual but am teaching LOTE (don't ask!).</p> <p>One thing I wanted to put out there is that aside from being more difficult to learn languages as an older child or an adult and lacking the innate understanding about word order, grammar etc the biggest issue is that unless you learn how to make certain sounds before a certain age, they're almost impossible to replicate later in life. Many people can't even hear how the sound is different and even if they can, can't make the right sound.</p> <p>I can't make the proper R in french or German, nor can I do the correct pronunciation of ei/ie sounds in German. I started learning languages at about 12. Most of the kids I'm teaching can't hear the difference between my ei/ie pronunciation and that of a native German speaker. I can hear it, but can't make it. It means that languages with very similar words which change with intonation are very difficult to learn.</p> <p>I would really encourage your DH to use his language with your child at least until they start school. Get the grandparents to send over DVDs/CDs/Books etc or buy them online so that at least if your child wants to go back or learn the language at some point they've got the ability to speak properly.</p> <p>What I've found is that most kids from families with parents from different countries are really fascinated by language and come up to me all day telling me interesting things about their parents' country or language. Lots of them are really looking for a connection between who they are, the Australian culture</p>
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			and the culture of the country that their parents come from.
30	Jesus	06 March 2012	I'm bilingual and my kids will hopefully be too. DH speaks a bit, but not enough. They can all learn.
31	LifeGoesOn	06 March 2012	<p>QUOTE</p> <p>Do you not think that when they are older they may want to visit your native country ?</p> <p>They can and they will. As I said, I am bilingual, which means English is also spoken in my 'native' country.</p> <p>There is absolutely no reason for them to learn another 'dead' language.</p>
32	libbylu	06 March 2012	<p>Among child language development experts, linguists and speech pathologists it is considered an excellent thing to have more than one language. And in fact, in Australia we are one of a fairly small number of countries where it is the norm that only one language or dialect is spoken.</p> <p>You say your child may not use their other language, but once you know two languages, picking up a third is so much easier. It also provides extra opportunities to work in that country, to work with tourists or immigrants from that country, to do social, historical, political or cultural studies of that country and gives them advantages that many other Australian's don't have.</p> <p>However, if your DH is not willing to speak his native language to his child, then you can't do it for him. The best way to raise a child bilingual is to have one or more people in his/her life speak ONLY in that language as much as possible. It is quite a commitment, but a worthwhile one, I believe.</p>

Thread 13. OP13, 10 May 2013, Bilingual and multilingual families how much time do your kids spend with each of their languages?

OP13	tenar	10 May 2013	<p>This is a spinoff to my vent about how hard it is to find a Spanish speaking babysitter who will suit us. Lots of the people replying seem surprised at how important it is for us to find someone who can speak Spanish with the kids. I guess it's hard to understand how tricky it can be to get lots of exposure to a child's non-English language/s if the main carer (me, in our family) is the English speaker.</p> <p>So, other multilingual parents of EB:</p> <p>what languages do you speak at home?</p> <p>who speaks which language?</p> <p>which model of language use do you use (we do one-parent-one-language)</p> <p>what other support do your kids get for their minority language/s?</p> <p>how much time do you reckon your kids get operating in each language?</p> <p>We are an English and Spanish speaking household. DH is Spanish and I am Australian. My Spanish is limited, so he and I talk almost exclusively in English. He talks to the kids in Spanish exclusively, but because he also works very long hours, that is only for a few minutes each day. They spend a few hours together most weekends.</p> <p>My kids also go to Spanish playgroup, have some Spanish speaking friends, watch a lot of Spanish DVDs and are read to in Spanish about every second night. They talk to friends and family using Skype about once a fortnight on average. DD1 has been to Spain as a baby, DD2 has not yet been, and we occasionally have Spanish visitors here. And then</p>
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			<p>there's the babysitters. We have seen a massive improvement in DD1's Spanish since seeking out Spanish speaking carers for her about 1 day/week while I work. So now her Spanish is nearly age appropriate, though this lags her English by a long way, as she has rather advanced language skills in English.</p> <p>What do other families in this kind of situation do?</p>
1	(feral)epg	10 May 2013	<p>DD is only 13 weeks, but sounds like we're in almost exactly the same boat. DP is French, I speak a little but not really enough to teach a child WELL. I do 99% of the child raising.</p> <p>So lots of trying to speak French around DD, books, videos, DP reading to her etc.</p> <p>We have friends with bilingual children and the most common approach seems to be that 1 parent speaks each language until the child is at kindy or school, then a much bigger effort is needed on the second (non English language). Most of these families seem to speak a bit of a mix of French and English when we see them, but all of the kids have the 2 languages nicely separated when speaking to people who only speak English or only speak French. It's pretty amazing to see.</p> <p>From my reading it is quite common for bilingual children to initially lag slightly in both languages especially when starting school but pick up quite quickly and in fact do better with grammar etc long term.</p> <p>PS maybe try finding a spanish speaking playgroup as well?</p>
2	(feral)epg	10 May 2013	<p>DD is only 13 weeks, but sounds like we're in almost exactly the same boat. DP is French, I speak a little but not really enough to teach a child WELL. I do 99% of the child raising.</p> <p>So lots of trying to speak French around DD, books, videos, DP reading to her etc.</p>

			<p>We have friends with bilingual children and the most common approach seems to be that 1 parent speaks each language until the child is at kindy or school, then a much bigger effort is needed on the second (non English language). Most of these families seem to speak a bit of a mix of French and English when we see them, but all of the kids have the 2 languages nicely separated when speaking to people who only speak English or only speak French. It's pretty amazing to see.</p> <p>From my reading it is quite common for bilingual children to initially lag slightly in both languages especially when starting school but pick up quite quickly and in fact do better with grammar etc long term.</p> <p>PS maybe try finding a spanish speaking playgroup as well?</p>
3	tenar	10 May 2013	<p>epg where are you? There are a lot of French speaking families in our area and our kindergarten also runs the French program (ecole maternelle?) so lots of the kids go there for that reason. Some go on to French school (there are a handful of schools in Melbourne running either bilingual French programs in the Australian curriculum or the official French curriculum).</p> <p>I wish the Spanish speaking community were that organized (and yes we've looked into what it would take to set up a Spanish kindy program here, but it would take a lot more money than we'd have access to to do it).</p>
4	Mille-Mille	10 May 2013	<p>DP is Norwegian and I am Australian, we do one parent one language. Although I often catch DP speaking English with DD which really annoys me as her Norwegian has really slipped lately. He says he always forgets to speak Norwegian which I find really strange since it's his mother tongue.</p> <p>We do Facetime with family back in Norway quite often and DD gets to practice more then.</p>

5	tenar	10 May 2013	<p>QUOTE (Mille-Mille @ 10/05/2013, 01:16 PM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>DP is Norwegian and I am Australian, we do one parent one language. Although I often catch DP speaking English with DD which really annoys me as her Norwegian has really slipped lately. He says he always forgets to speak Norwegian which I find really strange since it's his mother tongue.</p> <p>It took my DH a good couple of years to learn to be consistent in speaking Spanish with DD1. It's hard to do, because he tends to respond in English when she speaks to him in English. He's better at it now, though not 100%.</p> <p>Like you, I used to "catch him out" speaking English to her and have to remind him to switch them into Spanish.</p> <p>It is amazing to watch the kids learning to process either or both languages and switch from one to another as the situation demands. Aren't our brains incredible!</p>
6	IsolaBella	10 May 2013	<p>My SIL is German. My brother and his wife live in EU.</p> <p>My niece only started speaking in German when she was 5. This is despite being born in Germany and living in German speaking town size she was 18m of age. She has regular contact visiting and staying with her German cousins and German Grandparents. At 7yrs she is perfectly bi lingual</p> <p>My nephew on the other hand was perfectly bi lingual at 18m of age, including knowing who to speak German to and who to speak English to.</p> <p>My other nice refused to speak German until she was four. She would only speak to her German cousins in English. Now at 5.5yrs she is perfectly bi lingual too.</p>

			They attended international schools and preschools where English is the official language (even though living in a German speaking town).
7	Feral-Lausii	10 May 2013	<p>My kids picked up their other language before we divorced. They see their Dad most weekends, and have retained their knowledge of it. So with me during the week, english. With their Dad, his language only, he doesn't really let them speak English. He's very proud of the fact they're bilingual.</p> <p>When we were still married though, it was English from me and he spoke to them in his language. Also helped me pick up the language too.</p> <p>QUOTE</p> <p>It is amazing to watch the kids learning to process either or both languages and switch from one to another as the situation demands. Aren't our brains incredible!</p> <p>I love watching that too. So glad my ex took the time and effort to make sure they could understand and speak his language. And love seeing the look on peoples faces when they realise my kids understand them...</p>
8	Sweet like a lemon	10 May 2013	Never thought about it. DH and I switch between English and Afrikaans. While DDs Afrikaans is not strong she can understand it mostly. After the Sept holidays I suspect it will be a lot stronger. In RSA pretty much everyone speaks 2 languages but many speak 3 or more. Different world.
9	Bess Marvin	10 May 2013	<p>My DH is bilingual, his family arrived in Australia when he was a baby. He didn't speak a word of English until FYOS, and doesn't remember it taking very long to catch up, but feels his other language started to suffer at that point. There was never any formal schooling offered for the family language, so he never learnt to read or write it either.</p> <p>He continues to speak his family's language with his</p>

			<p>parents, but it's been rapidly dropping off since he left home at 18. To the point now, where he is not confident enough to even consider teaching our DS a few words and has trouble speaking to his parents about more than the basics (eg we can't take them to medical appointments, as DH doesn't have the vocab to translate anymore).</p> <p>So I guess what I'm trying to say is, to consider formal education in both of your child's languages over the long-term, not just the early years. DH really regrets not knowing more of his own language, especially now he has a child. We will organise some language classes for DS, but it won't be the same as what you guys are offering your kids.</p> <p>Sorry to barge in, just thought I'd offer my two cents on the topic...</p>
10	boatiebabe	10 May 2013	<p>I was born to non English speaking parents and despite being born in Australia and living here did not speak English until I started school.</p> <p>My sister was the same, but in addition she was also fluent in Italian before starting school as she spent a lot of time with the Italian family next door.</p> <p>Once starting school we almost exclusively spoke English. At that time (era) being different wasn't such a good thing and we didn't want to be called "wogs" so we assimilated as best we could.</p> <p>I haven't really spoken my original language on a regular basis for the last 20 years, but I can do a bit better than just getting by when I travel to that country - not fluent by any stretch of the imagination. I just don't have the vocabulary.</p> <p>I'm perfectly fluent in English, and work as a professional writer. No one would ever know it was not my first language.</p>

11	Mppj is feral	10 May 2013	<p>My kids are bilingual and we facilitate this though them attending a bilingual school, having friends that speak this language etc etc.</p> <p>I think what people were 'surprised' about it your other thread was NOT the fact that you wanted your kids having broader exposure to their Dad's language, and not even that you wanted to have a Spanish speaking baby sitter to do that.....it was that you were annoyed that you couldnt get a babysitter to 'stick' and were finding it hard to replace - when your selection criteria was so strict - AND that you were willing to send them to a LDC that YOU strongly didn't like, rather than have a non spanish speaking babysitter.</p> <p>I think people were confused over your logic about the situation, not the fact that you want your kids to be bilingual.</p>
12	babatjie	10 May 2013	<p>My Australian husband has learnt to speak Afrikaans so we mostly speak that at home. Their first language is Afrikaans but through playgroup, kindergym, friends and TV!!! they have picked up English too. My son's English isn't close to the level of his Afrikaans but he is learning new things all the time.</p> <p>I have found a few Afrikaans apps on the iPad and I'm sure you'll find many Spanish ones.</p>
13	Mrs Dinosaurus	10 May 2013	<p>This is not me, but friends.</p> <p>They both have English as a second language.</p> <p>Mum speaks her native tongue at home all the time.</p> <p>Dad speaks English at home all the time.</p> <p>Grandma speaks second native language all the time and looks after him regularly plus sees him on a regular basis.</p> <p>He went to day care and school with only English speakers and as far as I know all his other sitters have been friends (all of us being English speakers).</p>

			<p>He is now 8 and is fluent in all three languages, however the parents and grandma have never deviated from their chosen language - he was forced to learn all three and continues to be forced to use all three.</p> <p>I remember an adorable conversation with him when he was with his Grandma and came up to me reading a book under a tree and said "blerdy blah blah" and i said "Child, I don't speak that language at all" and he rolled his eyes, sighed dramatically before converting to english for poor dumb me (he was 5 at the time)</p>
14	Guest_divineM_*	10 May 2013	<p>My 26 month old DD gets spoken to in one language by me and my parents ans sister, we are pretty consistent. I even translate books from English when I read to her. She gets spoken to by DH in his language (80% mixed with 20% English when he "forgets"). We speak to each other in English.</p> <p>DD goes to daycare 2 days a week. I would say she gets 50% my language, 10-20% DH's and 30-40% English. It shows - DH's language is her weakest even though she spends one full day a week with MIL, but MIL also mixes in a lot of English, despite many requests not to do so. We are trying for one parent one language.</p>
15	countrychic29	10 May 2013	<p>From a different perspective as someone who only has one language I think it is so important to do everything you can to teach your children, my DH spoke Afrikaans as a small child but his parents never kept it up when they moved to Aust, he doesn't remember a thing now .. Also FIL has not taught DH or BIL a single word in his mother tongue despite FIL's family all speaking Czech when together</p> <p>DH is most disappointed that he cannot speak either (admittedly he doesn't have an ear for language) - it is such an invaluable skill.</p>
16	JanetRose	10 May 2013	<p>I speak Kiswahili and my husband speaks Italian, our kids have grown up with both, however we speak English at home, as we don't speak each other's languages very well.</p> <p>We throw in a few questions here and there "Mum can</p>

			<p>I have a glass of water?" "Of course, do you know how to say that is Kiswahili?", "Dad can you pass the remote?" "I can if you can ask me in Italian" but we don't speak it between each other in a conversational sense. We spend enough time with both extended families for the girls to pick it up though.</p>
17	Fastrunnydog	10 May 2013	<p>Auslan - Australian Sign Language. DH's parents are both signing Deaf, along with his uncles, aunties and grandparents. We are both accredited interpreters. Our kids are bilingual in Auslan and English so they can communicate with their extended family. Like PP, I love seeing the looks on people's faces when they see that our kids understand their signs, It annoys me when people think we are doing it to be cute or trendy because apparently all the 'in' people teach their kids to 'sign'</p>
18	tenar	10 May 2013	<p>QUOTE (Bess Marvin @ 10/05/2013, 04:31 PM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>So I guess what I'm trying to say is, to consider formal education in both of your child's languages over the long-term, not just the early years. DH really regrets not knowing more of his own language, especially now he has a child. We will organise some language classes for DS, but it won't be the same as what you guys are offering your kids.</p> <p>Sorry to barge in, just thought I'd offer my two cents on the topic...</p> <p>I totally agree with that. We will be making sure our kids get taught the formal Spanish syllabus from the time they are school age. For a few reasons (we may live in Spain at some point), but mostly to give thy their best shot at being literate in both languages. So they will do up to year 12 level Spanish, eventually.</p> <p>QUOTE (mpjp @ 10/05/2013, 04:34 PM) <{POST_SNAPBACK}></p> <p>I think what people were 'surprised' about it your other thread was NOT the fact that you wanted your kids having broader exposure to their Dad's language, and</p>

			<p>not even that you wanted to have a Spanish speaking baby sitter to do that.....it was that you were annoyed that you couldnt get a babysitter to 'stick' and were finding it hard to replace - when your selection criteria was so strict - AND that you were willing to send them to a LDC that YOU strongly didn't like, rather than have a non spanish speaking babysitter.</p> <p>I think people were confused over your logic about the situation, not the fact that you want your kids to be bilingual.</p> <p>It's entirely possible that I was being illogical. I was upset and not thinking straight (getting a call late on Wednesday night to tell me we had no care for kids on Friday, on a week complicated by other factors already). But I wouldn't send the kids to a bad centre in preference to an English-speaking babysitter, though would consider a good centre if we could get places (unlikely) and if no Spanish speaking carers were available.</p> <p>It was comments such as suggesting that we simply play the kids Spanish DVDs or get them a half hour of tutoring a week to "fix the problem" that I was referring to. It takes a lot more than that...</p>
19	binchen	10 May 2013	<p>We are German and we do speak german at home. Both children attend(ed) daycare, PreSchool and Primary School and the older one will attend German Saturday School when she is in grade 1.</p>
20	annodam	10 May 2013	<p>Both DH & I are Greek. I speak more than DH does. Both sets of grandparents speak Greek to the kids, no English...</p> <p>DD nearly 12 Yr 6 goes to a school where Greek is the LOTE subject, we enrolled there specifically because of the Greek language & culture they teach. She also attends Greek school every Monday night for 3hrs. She can speak, read & write really well.</p>

			DS 4½ speaks a little & he will start at the same school DD attends in 2014.
21	LenaK	13 May 2013	<p>We do one parent one language. DS is two and speaks both languages equally. He is also able to recognise who speaks which language and he switches accordingly.</p> <p>DH spoke english with him accidentally the other day and DS corrected him by repeating the sentence in Dutch (DH's language)</p> <p>We do however currently live in the Netherlands so if we stay here learning formal English will not be a problem. If we return to Oz we are going to have to consider other options for exposure to Dutch.</p>


Thread 14. OP14, 10 April 2014, Bilingual bub - any tips?

OP14	Wasabi2013	10 April 2014	<p>Hi all,</p> <p>Our first baby is due in August and we would like some advice on teaching our daughter two languages.</p> <p>My native language is not English, and I would like to try teaching it to our daughter. We think it would work out best if I spoke to her exclusively in my native language, and DH in English. Now, I've heard this can be very difficult, and that you have to be pretty strict about only speaking to your child in your language. However, I'm not sure how I'd manage, since I'm equally as comfortable speaking English as my native tongue. I'd probably slip up all the time and end up talking to her in English! Also DH and I talk to each other in English so I'm not sure how our daughter will react to that.</p> <p>Here's some other ideas we have: I bought a few books in my language so I can read them to her. I have a CD with songs that we can sing along to together. Also, there's a daycare centre with kids from the same cultural background so we are thinking of using that as a way of letting her socialise with other kids that speak the same language.</p> <p>Has anybody here successfully taught their kids to be</p>
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			bilingual, and what did you do to achieve that? Any advice would be greatly appreciated!
1	Babatjie	10 April 2014	<p>I have bilingual kids. We mostly speak our first language, that isn't English at home. My husband has learnt to speak it too.</p> <p>I'm not strict about just speaking our first language at home but I gently encourage them when they switch to English, which isn't often at all.</p> <p>They are still stronger in their first language but they learn English very quickly.</p> <p>I would recommend reading in your first language, we listen to children's songs in our first language and limit English TV when they're very young. TV in your first language is great though.</p> <p>See if any playgroups are run where other kids/families that speak the language can get together.</p>
2	Fright bat	10 April 2014	<p>Unless your DH also speaks your language, it can be very very hard. Children learn as much by hearing conversation as by being spoken to one on one. Do you have friends who speak your language? Is there a playgroup you can join? DO you have family nearby?</p> <p>I knew I would not be able to get my kids fluent in my language by just talking to them in that as DH cannot speak it, and it is not a common language so it has been hard for him to learn and I am not the primary caregiver and I am not home that much. So all I have tried to do is teach them words in it, so that they learn to make the correct sounds.</p> <p>A child can pick up the language through immersion quite quickly later on (say spend six months in your country of heritage at some stage) - but in order to make sounds like a native speaker, those sounds need to be entrenched before age 4-5. My 4 year old cannot speak my language, but his pronunciation is absolutely spot on, and we intend to go live overseas for 6-12 months at some point.</p>

3	~Kay~	10 April 2014	<p>We are not bilingual but I went to a talk by our local Speech Therapists re: Helping Toddlers to Talk & they gave advice on this topic.</p> <p>They said you do need to have rules but you can switch between the 2 languages. The rules can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only speak your native language at home & let children learn English in the community. ▪ One parent speaks each language to child. ▪ Speak only native language at home, English when out. ▪ Speak native language at set time of the day for example you could speak your language to the child when you are home alone but switch to English when your partner is home. <p>Apparently kids adapt really easily but they have to 'know' what to language they're speaking hence the 'rules'. Problems arise if you switch back & forward & the child gets confused.</p>
4	Yogurtbliss	10 April 2014	<p>Hi OP, some friends of ours have had an amazing experience with their now 4 year old. They are a trilingual family!</p> <p>Mum speaks to child in language A Dad speaks to child in B And parents together is language C</p> <p>They obviously are flexible in social settings to a certain degree, but have mostly stuck with the rules. DS is a good speaker in each language, they are hoping to continue now that bub number 2 has arrived.</p>
5	babatjie	10 April 2014	<p>We have honestly not found it difficult at all. It is natural for me to speak in my first language though, the one I feel most comfortable in.</p> <p>Kids pick it up so easily, learn which one is which, and to whom they can speak each language.</p> <p>I'd definitely give it a go. You have nothing to lose.</p>

6	Wasabi2013	10 April 2014	<p>Thanks very much guys!</p> <hr/> <p>👤 babatjie, on 10 April 2014 - 02:37 PM, said: I would recommend reading in your first language, we listen to children's songs in our first language and limit English TV when they're very young. TV in your first language is great though. Yep, I plan to read in my language, and DH will read the English books to her. I've got some shows from my country on PC too, hopefully she'll get into them.</p> <hr/> <p>👤 agnodice, on 10 April 2014 - 02:47 PM, said: Unless your DH also speaks your language, it can be very very hard. Children learn as much by hearing conversation as by being spoken to one on one. Do you have friends who speak your language? Is there a playgroup you can join? DO you have family nearby? DH can speak a little bit of my language, but not a lot. He's still keen to learn and he says he'll learn with the little one!</p> <p>I don't have any friends in the area from the same background, and my mum lives three days drive away. We are going to try and find a playgroup and see how that'll go. Also, we are going to put our name down on the waitlist for the kindy that teaches my language and send her there once a week perhaps.</p> <p>Long trips back to my country is not really an option, but we do want to take her there every couple of years, so that she gets to experience her cultural herigate and meet the relatives.</p> <hr/> <p>👤 ~Kay~, on 10 April 2014 - 02:56 PM, said: Speak native language at set time of the day for example you could speak your language to the child when you are home alone but switch to English when your partner is home.</p> <p>That's definitely what I'll have to do. To make matters</p>
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			<p>complicated though, we'll be living with MIL and FIL who are there all day and will of course be speaking English to us.</p> <p>I'll just have to make it a rule that whenever I speak to my child, it'll be in my language. She'll be confused enough by me switching to English whenever I speak to the others in the house!</p>
			<p> Yogurtbliss, on 10 April 2014 - 03:08 PM, said:</p> <p>Hi OP, some friends of ours have had an amazing experience with their now 4 year old. They are a trilingual family!</p> <p>OMG, that's truly amazing!! I guess in countries like Switzerland it's not uncommon for people to be able to speak more than two languages. Hopefully I can make our environment as multi-language-friendly!</p> <p>Luckily my language is one of those that get taught at school, so she'll eventually reap some benefits from me teaching it to her!</p>

Thread 15. OP15, 16 June 2014, Bilingual children

OP15	Making Memories	16 June 2014	<p>I'm currently 23 weeks pregnant with a baby boy.</p> <p>My husbands first language is Spanish and we want this to be passed down to our child.</p> <p>I plan to speak to the child in English and he will speak to the child in Spanish. There is an even mix of Spanish and English spoken in our home at other times (we have my daughter who speaks English but knows very basic Spanish, as well as his brother who is very proficient in both English and Spanish) My husband's English is around 85%, and my Spanish is not all that good. In terms of child care, when I return to work it will be likely that his mother (who speaks only Spanish) will be looking after the baby.</p> <p>I don't really know much about bilingual children in terms of language development. If anyone is willing to share their</p>
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			<p>experience that would be very much appreciated.</p> <p>Also if anyone could direct me to any online resources etc that would be really great.</p>
1	Gudrun	16 June 2014	The secret to success is determining which language each significant person in the child's life uses with the child and them absolutely sticking to it.
2	Baroness Bubbles	16 June 2014	<p>And dont panic if the child is slightly behind the 'normal'. They are learning 2 languages simultaneously, so being a little behind is to be expected.</p> <p>My cousin's daughter speaks English and Japanese. She started talking about 3 months after DD (they are 4 days apart in age).</p> <p>Now, at 5, she is completely bilingual</p>
3	Sif	16 June 2014	<p>My brother and I grew up bilingual. For me it was as natural as anything, but for my brother it was very difficult, he sometimes spoke the wrong language to the wrong person and would then be admonished or ridiculed for it, so between the age of three and five he became a voluntary mute.</p> <p>Just be sure that your child is always supported no matter which language he speaks and to whom.</p>
4	knottygirl	16 June 2014	<p>A friend's child was only spoken to in Japanese but managed to learn English from other family and friends by about age 4.</p> <p>Dh fancies himself as a Japanese speaker, and he asked her a question once in Japanese and she gave him a weird look and answered in English. But we have had Japanese exchange students who she would freely talk to in Japanese, like she knows how should be talking which language.</p>
5	Sheep	16 June 2014	My partner is Swedish and we've always spoken English and Swedish respectively with our sons, kids tend to find it completely natural at this age. My eldest mixed Swedish and English words (I think based on whichever was easiest to pronounce) until he was 2 and then he switched completely to English (always understood Swedish but would answer in English) until he was around 4 and then he started to use

			<p>Swedish again (I had done some reading and knew this was common, so I wasn't worried). He was at school in Switzerland for 2 years so he can speak 3 languages now.</p> <p>We have friends in Switzerland, mother is Israeli, father Swedish (they speak English with each other) and their kids can speak Hebrew, Swedish, German and English. Also my ex husband, half Swiss, half Spanish, could speak 4 languages as a child and was fluent in 9 when I met him. I grew up with one and despite having spent several years in non English speaking countries, I still wouldn't really consider myself multilingual. I think my kids are very lucky.</p>
6	GlitterFish	16 June 2014	<p>I speak only spanish to my 18 month old little man, my husband and his family speak english to him. He attends daycare 4 days per week.</p> <p>He is only now starting to say a handful of words, nothing fluent as yet. We have mum, dad, no, ta, hello/hola, nom nom, every now and then a 'gracias' (thank you). He is very chatty in his own baby language.</p> <p>The excellent thing with him is that he perfectly understands both english and spanish. Instructions are followed when given in either language.</p> <p>It is a little hard seeing all his friends in daycare speaking and he isn't, but I reassure myself when I see that he understands everything really well. I haven't accessed any resources as yet - my thinking is that since is talking to us in his own language, there is a drive in him that will help him when it comes to proper words. If he does get stuck at a later date, I'll start worrying then.</p> <p>Good luck with everything, what a previous poster said about parents picking a language and sticking with it has been our standing too.</p>
7	LenaK	16 June 2014	<p>My DS (3) is Dutch/English. We also do one parent, one language - I speak english and DH speaks dutch.</p> <p>I agree with Gudrun... consistency is the key. You speak ONLY english and your DH speaks ONLY spanish.</p>

			<p>You are also lucky to have your inlaws speaking spanish :-)</p> <p>DS speaks both languages fluently. He naturally differentiates between the two languages and comfortably translates if/when he needs to.</p> <p>We try to have a range of books, DVD's games etc in each language, but other than being consistant in our own language we havnt had to actually DO anything.</p>
8	au*lit	16 June 2014	<p>I recently read an article about language acquisition and retention. It is commonly thought that children who learn a second (or third, etc) language will retain some memory of that language, even if they move away or stop speaking it. And if they're exposed to the language again they will be able to pick it up easily.</p> <p>This article was about research that showed this is not true. Children need to continue to be exposed to and speak the language up until puberty to retain it. So while it's unlikely that you or your DH (or his family) will stop speaking either language, just remember it's important to keep it up.</p> <p>Based on my observation of some bilingual families, some kids get embarrassed about speaking the 'other' language. This usually ends up with them being able to understand, but their ability to speak is very limited. If your son is one of these kids, I'd be doing everything I could to help him get over the embarrassment and encouraging him to speak Spanish.</p>
9	tenar	16 June 2014	<p>My kids are Spanish/English bilingual. We work as hard as possible to encourage their spanish and it's an uphill battle because their main carer (me) doesn't speak to them in Spanish.</p> <p>OP if your Spanish is fluent enough to do so, speak to your baby in Spanish. Speak only Spanish at home. Aim to set up situations where your child must speak the minority language in order to communicate. Otherwise it's so hard to keep them motivated to do it.</p> <p>more later (got to dash)</p>

10	tenar	16 June 2014	<p>OK, I'll continue a bit now</p> <p>We know lots of Spanish/English bilingual children. The only ones we know who really speak good Spanish (this unfortunately doesn't include our DDs) are the ones whose mothers speak Spanish and really, to be honest, the ones where both parents speak Spanish to the children exclusively, so the kids end up not learning English until they are 3 or so and start kinder (this can cause other problems, but that's another whole discussion).</p> <p>We can't do that because my Spanish isn't fluent enough, so we make enormous efforts to support and encourage our girls in their Spanish. This includes sourcing Spanish books (hard, because for reasons I don't understand the available children's literature in Spanish is pretty crappy compared to the available in English), making them watch most of their TV in Spanish (Peppa pig and all - I do hold out for Playschool in English because it's better than anything else and there is nothing in Spanish like it at all that I've found), having Spanish visitors, going to Spanish playgroup every fortnight (actually for awhile we were organising our own local Spanish playgroup but that died), seeking out play dates with Spanish speaking kids and so on, you get it.</p> <p>What we do isn't enough to ensure fluency. The kids understand completely, but they often refuse to speak Spanish to their Dad. DD1 is reasonably compliant with it at the moment, but DD2, who is very verbal for her age (nearly 3) in English barely utters a word of Spanish. It's going to get harder, not easier, as they get older and are more surrounded by English speaking peers. If we can, we'll take them to school in Spain for a year or so, which would help enormously, but it's a really hard thing to arrange to do (ie DH and I would have to be able to work there).</p> <p>What I am getting to here is that you need to make a plan to support the Spanish as much as possible from the start, and keep working at it, if you want your kids to be more than passably fluent in Spanish. We want ours to be literate, not just fluent, and it's going to be a hard road.</p> <p>If you are in Melbourne I can suggest specific resources, but the best idea would be to google for Spanish language</p>
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			<p>playgroups or meetups in your local area. Some of the consulates offer that kind of thing, for example.</p> <p>Good luck! It's a wonderful opportunity for a child to be able to grow up bilingual</p>
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