

## Do You Want Your Child to Be a Lifetime Language Learner?

Did you realize that ninety percent of our brain is developed by age five? Have you heard how the first five years of life are the most crucial to the cognitive development of a human being? Even if you do not have the time to read the latest statistics or scour the journals reporting on the most recent research of brain development, I hope to share with you just how much of a difference you can make as a parent during the very early years. As I travel our country speaking on the topic of introducing a second language to young children prior to elementary school age, I find it amazing how many fellow educators still do not realize the many myths surrounding language learning. I wonder how many of you still think that introducing a new language to a young child will confuse him and cause him to be language delayed? In the book titled *The Bilingual Edge* written by Drs. Kendall King and Alison Mackey there are many pages and sections that speak specifically to this fear many parents, teachers, and even pediatricians have held onto for years. There exists no scientific evidence supporting this widespread myth that children learning two languages will experience language delay. In fact, research has been conducted proving that bilingual children acquired both languages on the same timetable as monolingual children. Do not fall prey to these myths that surround language learning. You need to assert yourself as a parent of modern times, knowing that the English only mentality can no longer prevail, and take charge of the future of your children by providing them awesome tools to acquire new languages. In this great book written by Drs. King and Mackey, who also happen to be raising their own children to be bilingual, parents will discover that being a native speaker of the new and targeted language is not a requirement to give the gift of that language to their own children. Once again the myth has existed that told us we would mess up the new language learning for our children by mispronouncing the words or perhaps by messing up the syntax of that new language. Guess what my friends, my amigas and amigos? You need not worry that you cannot roll your r in Spanish or that your morning greeting in French sounds just a bit Southern in its accent! Interaction is the main key here for new language learning. As with all learning with your very young child, it is important that you engage the child with human interaction and not simply plopping them in front of a TV set to introduce the new skill or the new concept. Oh really? What a surprise as a mom of three! I never knew I had to be involved in the process. (Just kidding!) Make the new language learning fun. Make it easy on you, your daily routine and you and your child will want to do it again and again. And as a teacher I stress all the time that repetition is the key to learning anything at any age! The more you and your family have fun learning those days of the week in Spanish or counting to ten in Mandarin, the more apt you are as a group to want to venture even further on your second language journey. Choose products that are bilingual themselves in their presentation. I doubt you will love listening to a CD that sings only in Spanish or watching a movie that speaks only in French if you yourself speak only English as the parent. Plus the latest research suggests that while a child is still acquiring skills in her native language; do not replace the native language with the new one for learning. You should however place the new language right alongside the native language for quicker learning and longtime retention while providing a great point of reference for both child and adult. Should you choose to ignore the language learning myths that surround us daily and hop on board with the savvy mentality of making a difference in the future of your children, you will find you have a lifetime language learner on your hands! This is a child who respects other cultures and languages and will be a spontaneous language learner later in life. All the while this child will thank the adults who chose to introduce new languages early in his life. Make a difference today for the future of tomorrow.

### About the Author

Beth Butler is the founder of the BOCA BETH Program for young children. Enjoyed on The Education Channel, you can sample the BOCA BETH bilingual music and movies for free at <http://www.bocabeth.com> Call toll free 1.877.825.2622

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