

Muchachos



Singing Spanish

A Little Something To Think About

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Why are languages becoming increasingly popular and relevant in Early Years?

Ten years ago people would have thought it crazy to teach a second language to toddlers however language learning is becoming increasingly popular and there are plenty of articles out there which can help to explain why. Even when I had my own children, (now 3 ½ and 5) who I knew would be bilingual I was concerned as I had heard bilingual children sometimes speak later than monolingual children, but in actual fact this couldn't be further from the truth. In an increasingly global world languages can only be an advantage to your child as they grow and explore, but there is so much more to it than that, language learning has so many benefits for children's brains.

Here are some reasons for starting a second language at a young age



It's the best time to learn

Expert opinions differ as to when the perfect time to start learning a second language, however what they all agree on is that it is somewhere between birth and age 6, the ages 18 months to 3 or 4 years mark a time of heightened language acquisition, so it makes sense that a second language should be learnt at this time.

Languages help children to learn better...

...by improving their cognitive abilities which basically means the practice of having to decide between two words every time they see something, makes them better at problem solving and multi-tasking. It means they perform better in exams etc as they grow older as they look at different meanings for the questions before deciding upon an answer.

Languages give children a more complex understanding of the world

This means they are more open and more aware of how their behaviour affects others or how others may not operate in exactly the same way



Languages improve their communication skills...

..by learning a second language they have a better understanding of how language works and are able to communicate more efficiently and therefore they speak better English

Languages improve literacy

Studies have shown that reading skills can be transferred across languages and that bilingual children understand reading and its basis as a print system better.

Languages have anti-ageing properties and are protection against Alzheimer's

By stretching your brain and making it work harder you in effect avoid some of the pitfalls of ageing, such as being easily distracted and forgetful.

Other studies show that language learning increases confidence, improves long term memory, and increase creativity and mental flexibility

The great news is that to benefit from bilingualism your children do not have to be completely bilingual, any language acquisition will help them on their way.



- Languages learning has just been made compulsory from age 7 in the UK starting September 2014
- The EU recommends that all children should start at age 3
- 11 countries in Europe already have compulsory language learning for children from age 3
- A pilot scheme run in Primary schools in the UK found:
 - General improvement in learning
 - Better understanding of language in general
 - Improved confidence and communication skills

(information taken from a report by www.speaktothefuture.org)

Further Information

If you would like to read more about the benefits of language learning in children you can find my facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Muchachos-Singing-Spanish/156129421102317> where there are plenty of links to recent articles, or here are a few more links:

<http://www.insideinly.org/2012/world-languages-for-toddlers-preschool-and-beyond/>

<http://spanglishbaby.com/2012/04/how-reading-skills-transfer-across-languages/>

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/educators-once-opposed-raising-bilingual-children-experts-now-say-its-beneficial/2012/06/08/gJQAdz9gUV_story.html

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/opinion/sunday/the-benefits-of-bilingualism.html>

<http://www.netmums.com/activities/fun-at-home/learning-languages-for-children>

