

## Multiple Languages in Preschool

### Teaching Foreign Languages to Children Should Begin Early

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The importance of teaching foreign languages in daycare and preschool settings

Learning language is a natural process when children are young. Experts agree that introducing children to foreign languages should begin as early as possible. The earlier, the better!

Incorporating foreign language lessons and activities in your daycare or preschool is an excellent way for daycare providers and preschool teachers to promote children to develop to their complete potential in all areas of growth.

#### Why Start Early?

“The earlier a child is exposed to another language the greater the likelihood that the child will become truly proficient in the language,” says Myelita Melton CEO of SpeakEasy Communications, Inc, and author of the SpeakEasy Spanish™ series.

Francois Thibaut, founder of the [Language Workshop for Children](#), says infants begin practicing words (or babbling) at about five months old and start uttering recognizable words between their eighth and sixteenth month. While an infant's body is weak at this age, this does not mean that her mind is also weak.

“On the contrary, infants' brains are strong, finely-tuned computers programmed to mimic everything they see and hear. Babies are learning all the time. As they're listening and watching, they're absorbing and remembering. As a matter of fact they begin learning their first language(s) while still in utero,” says Thibaut.

In addition, by the age of 6 months, an infant's long term memory is almost fully developed. Thibaut explains that although unborn infants cannot see, they are cognitively recording the basic phonetic sounds that their mother speaks. When they are born, they then begin the lifelong process of inventorying sounds and meanings for every language they hear.

#### The Disadvantages of Delaying Foreign Language Learning

Waiting until after the age of 10 to begin introducing foreign languages is disadvantageous. “Some suggest that waiting until age 10 or later is too late to develop true fluency”, says Melton.

Steven Zelin, Singing CPA (Children's Performing Artist) and music teacher at Little Dreamers of NYC, explains that children's language center in the brain develops from the time they are born until they are 10 years old. As their soft palates form, children have the ability to form the sounds correctly and, therefore, learn any language.

“They learn multiple languages in a parallel path instead of “translating” from their native language at a later age. They learn to think in multiple languages and be fluent much more easily than after the age of 10 when most schools start offering language,” says Zelin.

In our increasingly diverse world, it is advantageous for young children in your care to acquire and set multiple language development.