



multilingual
parenting

Supporting multilingual families

5 mistakes parents make when trying to raise bilingual children

1. Believing that their child will automatically become bilingual

Many bilinguals have grown up to naturally master the family languages, without anyone paying too much attention to the process: the circumstances happened to be ideal. This can however not be taken for granted. Just because the family uses two (or more) languages does not mean that the children will learn to speak them. The children may become what is known as passive or receptive bilinguals which means that they understand the family languages but only speak the community language.

- It doesn't happen by magic!

2. Not being consistent

To be in with the best possible chance of successfully raising their child to become bilingual parents should try to be consistent in their language use. Research has shown that children whose parents readily switch from one language to another are more likely to stop using the minority language with their parent. This usually happens at the point when the children get more exposure to the community language through nursery or school. If parents have maintained a consistent language pattern at home the chances are considerably higher that the minority language will continue to be an actively used language for the children.

- Language: choose it and use it and you won't lose it!

3. Giving up too easily

There are several obstacles to be overcome when bringing up a bilingual child. Parents need to be committed to the task at hand so these challenges don't derail them. The best thing to do is to learn about the possible hurdles in advance and be aware of the myths surrounding bilingual children – and most of all, having the confidence to go on.

- Don't be the parent who failed to plan!

4. Leaving it until later

While it is never too late to learn a language (as a child or even as an adult), it is definitely true that the earlier a child starts to learn the family languages the easier the journey is. Waiting until the child has learnt the community language means that the family is used to only speaking the community language, a pattern which is not easy to change.

- Leave it until later and later may never come!

5. Not seeking help and support

Being a parent is not an easy task at the best of times, and throwing an extra language into the mix does not make it any easier. It is saddening to see children miss out on being able to speak with their grandparents or other relatives. The situation could so easily have been different, had the parents sought advice on how to make sure that the family languages are passed on to the next generation.

- A wise parent asks for advice when needed!



My name is **Rita Rosenback**, I am a language expert and I help parents in families with more than one language raise their children to become bilingual. In my book "**Bringing up a Bilingual Child**" I guide you through the seven core elements of raising a bilingual child: *communication, confidence, commitment, consistency, creativity, culture and celebration*.

Read more and *join the community* of other like-minded parents on my website at www.multilingualparenting.com. Check out the different *membership options* to find which one suits you best. Participate in the *forums* and don't forget to sign up to the weekly *newsletter* with useful tips and information - each week I also answer one parent's question on the topic of bilingual children.

If you are looking for individual advice, tailored to your family's needs, please send an email to coaching@multilingualparenting.com or call me on 07941 445538 and I will get in touch to discuss the available options.