ore playgroups

**Bilingual Options**

***Dr Susanne Döpke***

***Consultant in Bilingualism***

***Speech Pathologist***

ABN: 42 945 379 056

Snippets for Bilingual Families
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Scouts in Other Languages, Right Here in Australia

After the success of our German playgroups and German Playschool, we wanted something for our kids to help them maintain their bilingualism through their primary and secondary school years.  The LOTE programs in most schools are not enough to cultivate bilingualism.   We wanted something that would be suitable for boys and girls, be active, involve parents and children together, be something different every week so kids didn't get bored, be so exciting that kids would really WANT to come and use their language skills.  We'd read that kids start to baulk at using their other language most at 5 years old (when they start school) and in their teens (when peer opinion becomes all important).  So we wanted to surround our kids with other kids who spoke their language during those critical times.  We figured if we could get kids through those two hurdles, we'd have success.

So we started the German Australian Pfadfinder Scout Group.  It started with a few families, and is now about 40 strong, with joeys, cubs and scouts, spread over two nights a week. We go on camps, we volunteer in the community, we participate in state-wide and national activities, and we do a lot of exciting things in our own group.  It is fun interacting with other groups too - they are fascinated that we are so 'exotic', all speaking our language.  The wide variety of activities we run in scouts also helps really deepen and broaden our kids' vocabulary, too.

Our group is part of Scouts Australia, and we have loved every step of the way!  The scout association has been super supportive of us.  (There is  also the Ethnic Scouts Association operating in Victoria, but I don't know too much about them.)

Our group has had so much fun and been such a success, there are now French, Spanish and Chinese scout groups in Canberra.

If you are interested in starting a language-based scout group, feel free to email spielwelt@homemail.com.au for tips on starting and running such a group.  There are lots of options.

DO YOU WANT TO LEARN SPANISH ???

Coburg Community Houses is offering interactive Spanish classes for kids and adults. Spanish native speaker from Colombia, South America is developing an attractive methodology which includes lesson plans, conversational classes, and interactive activities. Knowledge is a powerful tool to open the doors to discover the world. Take this opportunity to learn a romantic and interesting language!

**Spanish for Kids** at Newlands Coburg Community House. Thursday at 2:30pm – 3:30 pm. Address: 20 Murray Road, Coburg North. (3 to 5 years olds). **Price: $60 (6 sessions).** Apply concession.

**Spanish for Kids** at Coburg Community House. Thursday at 4:15pm -5:15pm. Address: 32 Nicholson Street, East Coburg (7 to 12 year olds ). **Price: $60 (6 sessions).** Apply concession.

**Spanish for beginners** at Newlands Coburg Community House. Tuesday at 6pm – 7:30 pm. Address: 20 Murray Road, Coburg North. **Price: $90 (6 sessions).** Apply concession.

**Spanish for intermediate** at Coburg Community House. Thursday at 6:30pm -8:00pm. Address: 32 Nicholson Street, East Coburg. **Price for adults: $90 (6 sessions).** Apply concession.

Please use the link below to enrol and pay.

<https://www.trybooking.com/Event/EventListingURL.aspx?aid=39627>

Further information, please to contact:

1. 20 Murray Road, Coburg North, 0385282332, newlandsch@moreland.vic.gov.au

2. 32 Nicholson Street, East Coburg, 0399135472, eastcoburgch@moreland.vic.gov.au

Te esperamos Amigos !!!

Benefit for trilingualism from engaged language interactions

Two recent case studies have shown that when caregivers engage in a highly intensive interaction with their child, it is an effective method to help the child achieve active trilingualism.

The report, which focused on two children in Switzerland between the ages of two and three, found that despite comparable exposure to all three languages, the two children differed in how much they liked to use their languages.

The child  who used all three languages was the one whose caregivers systematically addressed moments when he did not reply in the chosen language of conversation.

According to the author,  it is important that the caregiver  consistently indicates which language is expected of the child, bases aspects of their conversation on choice questions, and provides appropriate vocabulary when needed.

This technique enables the caregiver to ask questions which require the child to respond, to react in an animated way, and also to heap praise on the child when answering appropriately.

When this technique was not used, only 13% of overall utterances of one child were in the chosen language of French.

The study, which followed the two children in conversation with their different caregivers once a month over a year, also suggests that not speaking the language of the country at home is another important factor to help achieve active trilingualism, as it motivates the child to use the home languages on the one hand, and to experience an even amount of exposure to all three languages, on the other.

In the household where the language of the outside community was not spoken, the child produced over 90% of all utterances in each of his three languages.

This study by Sarah Chevalier was first published in the open access peer reviewed International Journal of Multilingualism.

Niamh Geoghegan and Andrea Pinilla Bona

Sarah Chevalier (2012): Active trilingualism in early childhood: the motivating role of caregivers in interaction, International Journal of Multilingualism 9(4): 437-454. DOI:10.1080/14790718.2012.714385

Additional storytimes in Spanish (VIC)

Time: 11.00am-12 noon  in Collingwood Library, 11 Stanton Street Abbotsford . \*Cost: FREE  \*Bookings not required! \*Dates for your diary: June 2, September 1 & December 1!!

Parent question: Which language?

**Question:** *Thank you for your informative lecture today. I have gained much insight and tips on raising my son in a home with many languages. I had a couple of questions but did not have time to ask.*

*My husband and I would like our son (2 years old) to have Mandarin as his second language or at least the language he can learn other than English. I am fluent in English and Filipino with proficiencies in Mandarin, Hokkien, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Italian. My husband is bilingual in English and Cantonese, currently learning Mandarin. As a common language, we speak to each other in English and in turn in majority speak to our son in English. Our son attends a bilingual Mandarin-English childcare.*

*How do we approach teaching our son Mandarin when both of us are not that good (we're both at about primary school level)? We are conscious that different intonations make meanings of the words different and we don't want our non-proficiency/mistakes influence how he uses the language.  Would exposure via other means such as Chinese TV or songs help in this case? Or should we both persevere in learning Mandarin and advance our level of proficiency to support his development in the future?*

*Also, I have been teaching my son different words from the languages I know. Probably a word here and there... You mentioned in your lecture that quality is more important than quantity. I had the impression that exposure to a variety of languages is helpful. Am I wrong in this assumption? Would this actually hinder his development in other languages, ie English and Mandarin?*

**Answer:** Your language proficiency is very impressive, but the most is not the best. You won't do your son any harm teaching him the odd word here or there, but it is not going to contribute to his language proficiency either. At such young an age, he does not have a concept of "language". He only knows how people close to him talk, and if he can make sense of it (because they talk about what he is interested in, slowly and playfully) and if he hears words and word combinations often enough, he is most likely to want to talk back to each of these people in the way they talk to him. This is how young children learn languages: close relationship with a person and lots of fun. Electronic media are a useful add-on when used with discretion, but do not teach a child to use a language for interaction.

Ideally, parents speak the language to their children in which they are most proficient, usually their own first language, because this is the language of love and fun and memories for the parents. Middle class parents are often very successful imparting a language they have "adopted" because their heart is in it and they may even be more conscious of the needs of a little child learning the language than native speakers are, who all too often assume that children learn their parents' language automatically.

Sadly, wherever a family comes from (physically or linguistically) imparting a language other than the language of the society to your child takes some conscious effort, persistence, and a reasonable amount of time EACH day. With your child being in a Mandarin program already, this may be a good choice for your family. However, if English is the main language you speak to him and to each other, the long-term fate of his Mandarin is in other people's hands. If you all switch to Mandarin, you need to look closely at the richness of the language input to your son, not just the correctness. Are you likely to talk as much and about as many varied things to him as you would if you spoke Filipino or Cantonese? Will you have as much fun together? Could you have support from other family members? That said, imparting a language that is not the parent's first language can be done. For a very successful example, have a look at the books by George Saunders "Bilingual children. Guidance to the family" or "Bilingual children. From Birth to teens." (published by Multilingual Matters) If they are still out of print, you may be able to find copies in libraries.

On the road again

I am off gallivanting around the world again this Saturday. The trip this year will start with a 2-month volunteer assignment in Bilbao, Spain, in a centre for disadvantaged youth. After visiting family in Berlin, we will take the long way home on trans-Siberian railway with a few week in China and a month in Vietnam at the very end. I will be back at the end of October, in time for -- hopefully -- another seminar on *Raising Children With More Than One Language* in November or December. I'll keep you posted on that. Keep playing with your children, reading to them, and having lots of fun together!

Have a wonderful winter,

Susanne