

LITTLE PIM

WHY FOREIGN LANGUAGES ARE GOOD FOR BABIES, TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

Infancy and early childhood is the ideal time to immerse your child in a foreign language.

Babies gain understanding long before they can speak and benefit from having a rich language environment. That is because babies learn to talk by listening. Research tells us that the more words babies hear, the faster they learn to talk. Frequent daily exposure to words and active social engagement helps the brain pathways that foster language learning to develop more fully.

"Babies and young children have incredible early learning skills and are uniquely equipped to learn the building blocks of one or more languages starting at birth," said Dr. April Benasich, Little Pim Advisor and Director of the Infancy Studies Laboratory at the Center for Molecular & Behavioral Neuroscience, Rutgers University. "The developing brain unconsciously tracks the sounds and contours of the languages that surround them, noting the patterns and the subtle differences between sounds. This is an ideal time to introduce foreign languages to kids and to encourage cross-linguistic learning."

Babies and young children can differentiate between the sounds of any language in the world. Babies hear their mother's voices before birth and know the rhythm of their native language as newborns. Once born, babies can understand and discriminate the sounds of every language in the world. The sound elements or building blocks of language are called phonemes, and repeated studies show that adults are not as attuned as babies in perceiving phonemes.

Why do babies have this language advantage? Humans needed language, as early as possible, to evolve. The sooner an early human could learn to talk, the greater his chance of survival. He could quickly respond to life-saving commands such as "Stop!" or "Run!" After language acquisition is set in motion, the brain devotes its energy to other things, and unused functions weaken.

By five years of age, the early learning window begins to close. As they become "tuned" to their native language (or languages), children gradually lose the ability to tell the subtle sounds (phonemes) in foreign languages apart. Their innate ability gradually declines, and by five years of age, the most advantageous window of opportunity has begun to close. When people are introduced to new foreign sounds later in life, they can no longer hear the difference, thus making it much harder to imitate these sounds.



CONTINUE

FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND FUN

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Early foreign language exposure enhances a child's primary language development, and his or her brain power. Scientists continue to explore how a child acquires a language with speed and ease, but experts already agree to dismiss the idea that bilingualism can be “confusing” for a young child. “This idea was dramatically reversed in a landmark study by Elizabeth Peal and Wallace Lambert at McGill University in Montreal that showed a general superiority of bilinguals over monolinguals in a wide range of intelligence tests and aspects of school achievement,” said Dr. Ellen Bialystok, Professor of Psychology at York University, Canada.

Regarding this link between fluency and improved IQ, Dr. Andrea Mechelli of University College London published in Nature her team's research that found 'grey matter' density in scans of the left-brain was greater in bilinguals than in monolinguals. The brain's left side is responsible for processing information and controlling aspects of sensory perception, memory and speech. Dr. Mechelli found this increase was most significant in children who had learned a foreign language before the age of five.

Little Pim's method is modeled on how we naturally acquire language. Research shows that children learn best when their parents or caregiver actively play with them while naming items and actions in their daily life. The repetitive action of a child seeing an object, hearing the parent name it and then saying that name back to the parent is an essential part of a child's primary language development. Little Pim's DVDs are modeled on this natural way of learning. The award-winning series provides an interactive method with all the tools necessary for parents to become their child's first language tutor—even if the language is new to them too. By structuring and encouraging parent-child interaction, Little Pim's method fosters maximum language learning.

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