

# Re: Teaching a child three languages

---

*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2006-03/msg00405.html>

---

- *From:* Lee Sau Dan <[danlee@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:danlee@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Wed, 08 Mar 2006 20:09:31 +0800
- 

"Andrew" == Andrew  
Dalby  
<[akdalby@xxxxxxxx](mailto:akdalby@xxxxxxxx)>  
writes:

Andrew> I would suggest that's because the parents assume, perhaps  
Andrew> without ever thinking it through, that English is  
Andrew> important and Tagalog and Thai are a waste of time. To  
Andrew> elucidate this, consider the question: does the  
Andrew> English-speaking parent make any effort to be competent in  
Andrew> Tagalog / Thai?

And if such a family is living in the Philippines or Thailand, would  
that English-speaking parent even bother to learn Thai or Tagalog?

Andrew> If not, the children may see no need to do so  
Andrew> either. Children aren't silly.

I can't agree more! My 2nd (maybe 3rd or 4th) cousins in San  
Francisco cannot speak Cantonese anymore. They used to speak  
Toishanese and understand Cantonese before they went to school --  
their grandma, speaking Toishanese natively -- was their babysitter.  
But after they went to school, they no longer with with grandma. They  
live with their parents in the less crowded places in Bay Area. And  
they spoke English at home and school. They have essentially unlearned  
Cantonese/Toishanese. (There are 2 exceptions. The eldest uncle  
continued to live with his mother. So, his 2 sons can still  
understand instructions given to them in Cantonese/Toishanese. But  
they are reluctant in speaking those languages.)

--  
Lee Sau Dan

E-mail: [danlee@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:danlee@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)  
Home page: <http://www.informatik.uni-freiburg.de/~danlee>

Re: Teaching a child three languages